

## ***Equality Scheme for the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation (the Utility Regulator)***

***Drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the  
Northern Ireland Act 1998***

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contact us with your requirements (see page 12 for contact details).***

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Approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in 2012

## Foreword

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Act<sup>1</sup>.

In our equality scheme we set out how the Utility Regulator proposes to fulfil the Section 75 statutory duties.

We will commit the necessary resources in terms of people, time and money to make sure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that the equality scheme is implemented effectively, and on time.

We commit to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring our compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing our progress.

We will further develop our programme of communication and training with the aim of ensuring that all our staff and board members are made fully aware of our equality scheme and understand the commitments and obligations within it. We will develop a programme of awareness raising for our consultees on the Section 75 statutory duties and the commitments in our equality scheme.

We, the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Utility Regulator, are fully committed to effectively fulfilling our Section 75 statutory duties across all our functions (including service provision, employment and procurement) through the effective implementation of our equality scheme.

We realise the important role that the community and voluntary sector and the general public have to play to ensure the Section 75 statutory duties are effectively implemented. Our equality scheme demonstrates how determined we are to ensure there are opportunities, for people affected by our work, to positively influence how we carry out our functions in line with our Section 75 statutory duties. It also offers the means whereby persons directly affected by what they consider to be a

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<sup>1</sup> See section 1.1 of our Equality Scheme.

failure, on our part, to comply with our equality scheme, can make complaints.

On behalf of the Utility Regulator, we are pleased to support and endorse this equality scheme which has been drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Commission guidelines.

*Signed:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Bill Emery*  
*Chairman*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*John French*  
*Chief Executive*

*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_

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## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

### **Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998**

1.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires the Utility Regulator to comply with two statutory duties:

#### Section 75 (1)

In carrying out our functions relating to Northern Ireland we are required 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
- persons with dependants and persons without.

#### Section 75 (2)

In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, in carrying out our functions in relation to Northern Ireland we are required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

“Functions” include the “powers and duties” of a public authority<sup>2</sup>. This includes our employment and procurement functions. Please see below under “Who we are and what we do” for a detailed explanation of our functions.

### **How we propose to fulfil the Section 75 duties in relation to the relevant functions of the Utility Regulator**

1.2 Schedule 9 4. (1) of the Act requires the Utility Regulator as a designated public authority to set out in an equality scheme how we propose to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75 in relation to its relevant functions. This equality scheme is intended to fulfil that statutory requirement. It is both a statement of our arrangements for fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties and our plan for their implementation.

1.3 We are committed to the discharge of our Section 75 obligations in all parts of our organisation and we will commit the necessary available

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<sup>2</sup> Section 98 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

resources in terms of people, time and money to ensure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that our equality scheme can be implemented effectively.

## **Who we are and what we do**

Our predecessor organisation was first established in 1992, following privatisation of the Northern Ireland electricity industry, and our role extended in 1996 to cover gas. From April 2007 we also became the economic and customer service regulator for Northern Ireland's water and sewerage industries.

We are a non-Ministerial government department. We are independent of Ministers, who determine the legislative and policy parameters within which we operate; our role is to implement that policy, as embedded in the various statutes that set out our objectives and functions.

Our board currently consists of a chairman and six other members, plus the Chief Executive. Board members are appointed by the Minister for Finance in consultation with the Chair.

The office currently employs approximately 110 staff, with an annual budget around £11m.

The Chief Executive heads the Utility Regulator's Senior Leadership Team. The SLT also currently includes four Directors, two Executive Directors and 12 Head of Function across the Chief Executive's Office; Consumer and Business Protection; Price Controls; Markets; and Networks and Energy Futures. It meets weekly to review matters of common interest, and provides the collegiate leadership of the office.

In March 2009 we published our first five-year Corporate Strategy, and we also publish an annual Forward Work Programme. These documents together with further information about the Utility Regulator's work may be viewed at [www.uregni.gov.uk](http://www.uregni.gov.uk).

The 2019-2024 Corporate Strategy sets out Utility Regulator's Mission, Vision and Values. In 2016 we reviewed our Mission, Vision and Values and developed associated behaviours:

**Our mission:** To protect the short and long term interests of consumers of electricity gas and water.

**Our vision:** To ensure value and sustainability in energy and water.

**Our values:**

Be a best practice regulator: transparent, consistent proportionate, accountable and targeted.

Be professional: listening, explaining and acting with integrity. Be a collaborative, co-operative and learning team.

Be motivated and empowered to make a difference.

**Our behaviours**

UR Values and Associated Behaviours	
<p><b>1. Be a best practice regulator: transparent, consistent, proportionate, accountable, and targeted</b> This means:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Robust and objective analysis</li><li>2. Evidence based decision-making</li><li>3. Taking responsibility for actions and results</li><li>4. Challenging and seeking innovative solutions</li><li>5. Engaging with stakeholders</li><li>6. Responsiveness to customer needs</li><li>7. Learning from and benchmarking with best practice/other regulators</li><li>8. Following consistent, equitable and effective procedures</li></ol>	<p><b>3. Be a collaborative, co-operative and learning team</b> This means:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Being courteous and responsive to colleagues</li><li>2. Building and developing effective relationships</li><li>3. Sharing knowledge/information and helping to mentor</li><li>4. Developing and evolving consistent and equitable practices across the organisation</li><li>5. Keeping up to date and current with events and skills</li><li>6. Seeking and accepting honest feedback</li><li>7. Acknowledging mistakes and putting things right</li><li>8. Value differing opinions and ideas</li><li>9. Treating other as you would expect to be treated yourself</li></ol>
<p><b>2. Be professional – listening, explaining and acting with integrity</b> This means:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Being approachable and courteous with all stakeholders</li><li>2. Listening properly and responding specifically</li><li>3. Being patient, honest, transparent and respectful</li><li>4. Being open and sharing knowledge</li><li>5. Communicating clearly</li><li>6. Accepting constructive suggestions</li><li>7. Saying what you mean, meaning what you say</li><li>8. Being prepared to stand over analysis and decisions</li><li>9. Developing and nurturing effective relationships</li><li>10. Being influential and persuasive</li></ol>	<p><b>4. Be motivated and empowered to make a difference</b> This means:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Being positive and committed</li><li>2. Showing interest and initiative</li><li>3. Being willing to engage and develop</li><li>4. Being willing to give and take responsibility</li><li>5. Take ownership of objectives and success</li><li>6. Facilitating and supporting individual autonomy</li><li>7. Being supportive/courageous in decision making</li><li>8. Being willing to develop and learn</li><li>9. Understanding own role in protecting consumers</li><li>10. Understanding own contribution to organisational goals</li></ol>

**We are reviewing our organizational values as part of the process to develop our new corporate strategy from 2024.**

Our statutory objectives are to:

- ***Protect the short and long-term interests of electricity, gas, water and sewerage consumers with regard to price and quality of service;***



- ***Promote a robust and efficient water and sewerage industry, where appropriate to deliver high quality services;***
- ***Promote competition, where appropriate, in the generation, transmission and supply of electricity; and***
- ***Promote the development and maintenance of an economic and coordinated natural gas industry.***

We carry out our work in line with statutory duties set out in:

- The Energy (Northern Ireland) Order 2003
- [The Water and Sewerage Services \(Northern Ireland\) Order 2006](#)
- [The Gas \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1996](#);
- [The Electricity \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1992](#); and
- [Electricity \(Class Exemptions from the Requirement for a Licence\) Order \(Northern Ireland\) 2013\(external link opens in a new window / tab\)](#) .

Our work involves:

- issuing and maintaining licences for gas, electricity and water companies to operate in Northern Ireland;
- making sure that these companies meet relevant legislation and licence obligations;
- challenging these companies to keep the prices they charge as low as they can be;
- encouraging regulated companies to be more efficient and responsive to customers;
- working to encourage competition in the gas, electricity, water and sewerage services markets;
- setting the standards of service which regulated companies provide to customers in Northern Ireland; and
- acting as an adjudicator on certain customer complaints, disputes and appeals.

In carrying out our work we also take account of the needs of vulnerable consumers. We also aim to contribute to the promotion of sustainable development in exercising our regulatory duties.

## **Employment**

It is our policy to recruit staff only where there is a genuine requirement and to select the best person for each vacancy on the basis of merit. We will ensure that all vacancies will be resourced in a consistent and

professional manner and at all times will meet business and legislative requirements.

We are committed to a policy of treating all employees and candidates equally. No employee or potential employee shall be subject to discrimination or receive less favourable treatment or consideration during the recruitment and selection process on any of the equality grounds. Our commitment to equality of opportunity in employment statement reads:

‘The Utility Regulator is committed to providing equality of opportunity. It is our policy that all eligible persons shall have equal opportunity for employment and advancement in the organisation on the basis of their ability, qualifications and aptitude for the work. Everyone has a right to equality of opportunity and to a good and harmonious working environment and atmosphere in which all workers are encouraged to apply their diverse talents and in which no worker feels under threat or intimidated. This right is protected in many instances by legislation. It is our policy to provide employment equality to all, irrespective of:

- Gender, including gender reassignment
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Having or not having dependants
- Religious belief or political opinion
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, being an Irish Traveller)
- Having or not having a Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Age’

The policy is based on delivering an effective and efficient process which meets business needs and which ensures all employees and potential employees are treated in a fair and equitable manner at each stage of the recruitment and selection process. This includes providing information and application forms in alternative formats as required and making reasonable adjustments for the interviewing process as necessary.

We are also committed to the principle of openness, accountability and transparency in dealing with employees and applicants at all stages of the recruitment and selection process. This includes the provision of comprehensive information about the vacancy, open and active

communication about the selection processes to be adopted and the provision of comprehensive feedback to candidates.

### **Procurement**

Our procurement guidelines are based on those of the Central Procurement Directorate of the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP). In addition, we adhere to the principles set out in “Equality of Opportunity and Sustainable Development in Public Procurement” published jointly by the Equality Commission and DFP. We recognise that the primary objective of public procurement policy should be to achieve best value for money which includes ensuring that procurement must meet its requirements for equality of opportunity and sustainable development to be deemed good quality and fit for purpose.

## **Chapter 2      Our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the section 75 duties** (Schedule 9 4. (2) (a))

2.1 Some of our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties are outlined in other relevant parts of this equality scheme. Consultation arrangements are in chapter 3; monitoring arrangements and Equality Impact Assessment arrangements are in chapter 4; publication of information is in chapter 6 and 9; and complaints arrangements are in chapter 8.

In addition we have the following arrangements in place for assessing our compliance:

### **Responsibilities and reporting**

In order to inform this scheme, we have examined our existing functions to assess whether they impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity or the good relations duty.

We will proactively develop our promotion of good relations, recognising our statutory obligation.

2.2 We are committed to the fulfilment of our Section 75 obligations in all parts of our work.

2.3 Responsibility for the effective implementation of our equality scheme lies with the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive is operationally responsible for equality duties: the development, implementation, maintenance and review of the equality scheme in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, including any good practice or guidance that has been or may be issued by the Equality Commission. The Chief Executive is accountable to our Board.

2.4 If you have any questions or comments regarding our equality scheme, please contact in the first instance Susan Lavery at the address given below and we will respond to you as soon as possible:

Susan Lavery  
The Utility Regulator  
Queens House  
14 Queen Street  
Belfast BT1 6ED

Tel: 028 9031 1575  
Email: [susan.lavery@uregni.gov.uk](mailto:susan.lavery@uregni.gov.uk)  
SMS: 07794 965909

2.5 Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties will be integrated into our strategic and operational business plans<sup>3</sup>. Our Forward Work Plan (FWP) comprises a summary of all non-routine actions planned by us during the year. Our statutory duties are included in our FWP on an annual basis which comprise of protecting vulnerable consumers by having regard to the interests of individuals who are disabled or chronically sick; individuals of pensionable age and individuals with low incomes. Section 75 of the NI Act also requires us to consider other groups such as children. We seek to secure improvements in service delivery to vulnerable customers through our monitoring of licence conditions and codes of practice. This is achieved through the regulatory processes and also in consultation with vulnerable customers and their representative organisations.

2.6 Employees' job descriptions and personal performance plans reflect their contribution to the discharge of the Section 75 statutory duties and implementation of the equality scheme, where relevant. The personal performance plans are subject to appraisal in the annual and mid-year performance review.

2.7 We prepare an annual report on the progress we have made on implementing the arrangements set out in this equality scheme to discharge our Section 75 statutory duties (Section 75 annual progress report).

The Section 75 annual progress report will be sent to the Equality Commission by 31 August each year and will follow any guidance on annual reporting issued by the Equality Commission.

Progress on the delivery of Section 75 statutory duties will also be included in our organisational annual report.

2.8 The latest Section 75 annual progress report is available on our website [www.uregni.gov.uk](http://www.uregni.gov.uk) or by contacting Susan Lavery (details in section 2.4)

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 4 'Timetable for measures proposed' and section 2.11 of this equality scheme.

2.9 We will liaise closely with the Equality Commission to ensure that progress on the implementation of our equality scheme is maintained.

### **Action plan/action measures**

2.11 We have developed an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. This action plan is set out in Appendix 6 to this equality scheme.

2.12 The action measures that will make up our action plan will be relevant to our functions. These were developed through an audit of inequalities which was carried out in 2010. The audit of inequalities gathered and analysed information across the Section 75 categories<sup>4</sup> to identify the inequalities that exist for our service users and those affected by our policies<sup>5</sup>. The audit of inequalities is a living document that will be amended as continued evidence is gathered on newly identified inequalities.

2.13 Action measures will be specific, measurable, linked to achievable outcomes, realistic and time bound. Action measures will include performance indicators and timescales for their achievement.

2.14 We will develop any action plans for a period of between one and five years in order to align them, as far as possible, with our corporate and business planning cycles. Implementation of the action measures will be incorporated into our business planning process. The implementation of action measures will be monitored and reviewed at regular management meetings. Other business areas with a potential impact on equality issues will also be considered at this time.

We will ensure that implementation of the Section 75 duties is supported with necessary resourcing (in terms of people, time and finance) to ensure that the statutory duties are complied with. We will inform and train staff on the requirements of the statutory obligations and how they can be efficiently implemented.

2.15 We will seek input from our stakeholders and consult on our action plan before we send it to the Equality Commission and thereafter when reviewing the plan as per 2.16 below. We are committed to consulting on matters relating to the statutory duties in accordance with the Equality

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<sup>4</sup> See section 1.1 of this equality scheme for a list of these categories.

<sup>5</sup> See section 4.1 of this equality scheme for a definition of policies.

Commission's guiding principles, as set out below in Section 3. The organisation will choose methods that seem most appropriate in each case (see section 3 below for more detail).

2.16 We will monitor progress on the delivery of our action measures annually and update the action plan as necessary to ensure that it remains effective and relevant to our functions and work.

2.17 We will inform the Equality Commission of any changes or amendments to our action plan and will also include this information in our Section 75 annual progress report to the Commission. Our Section 75 annual progress report will incorporate information on progress we have made in implementing our action plans/action measures.

2.18 Once finalised, our action plan will be available on our website ([www.uregni.gov.uk](http://www.uregni.gov.uk)) or from

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SMS: 07794 965909

If you require it in an alternative format, please contact us on the details provided.

## **Chapter 3 Our arrangements for consulting**

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (a)) - on matters to which a duty (S75 (1) or (2)) is likely to be relevant (including details of the persons to be consulted).

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (b)) on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by us on the promotion of equality of opportunity.

3.1 We recognise the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of our statutory equality duties. We will consult on our equality scheme, action measures, equality impact assessments and other matters relevant to the Section 75 statutory duties.

3.2 We are committed to carrying out consultation in accordance with the following principles (as contained in the Equality Commission's guidance *'Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)*)

3.2.1 All consultations will seek the views of those directly affected by the matter/policy, regulated utilities, the Equality Commission, representative groups of Section 75 categories, other public authorities, voluntary and community groups, our staff and recognised trade union (NIPSA) and such other groups who have a legitimate interest in the matter, whether or not they have a direct economic or personal interest.

Initially all consultees (see Appendix 3), as a matter of course, will be notified (by email or post) of the matter/policy being consulted upon to ensure they are aware of all consultations. Thereafter, to ensure the most effective use of our and our consultees' resources, we will take a targeted approach to consultation for those consultees that may have a particular interest in the matter/policy being consulted upon and to whom the matter/policy is of particular relevance. This may include for example regional or local consultations, sectoral or thematic consultation etc.

3.2.2 Consultation with all relevant stakeholders will begin as early as possible. We will engage with affected individuals and representative groups to identify how best to consult or engage with them. We will ask our consultees what their preferred consultation methods are and will give consideration to these. Methods of consultation could include:

- Face-to-face meetings
- Focus groups



- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- Questionnaires
- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/opt out of the consultation
- Internet discussions or
- Telephone consultations.

This list is not exhaustive and we may develop other additional methods of consultation more appropriate to key stakeholders and the matter being consulted upon.

3.2.3 We will consider the accessibility and format of every method of consultation we use in order to remove barriers to the consultation process. Specific consideration will be given as to how best to communicate with children and young people, people with disabilities (in particular people with learning disabilities) and minority ethnic communities. We take account of existing and developing good practice, including the Equality Commission's guidance *Let's Talk Let's Listen – Guidance for public authorities on consulting and involving children and young people (2008)*.

Information will be made available, on request, in alternative formats<sup>6</sup>, in a timely manner. Requests for alternative formats will be responded to usually within three (3) working days. We will ensure that such consultees have equal time to respond.

3.2.4 Specific training is provided to those facilitating consultations to ensure that they have the necessary skills to communicate effectively with consultees.

- 3.2.5 To ensure effective consultation with consultees<sup>7</sup> on Section 75 matters, we will develop a programme of awareness raising on the Section 75 statutory duties and the commitments in our equality scheme. arranging pre-consultation meetings with Section 75 representative groups and stakeholders to discuss specific policies as required;

3.2.6 The consultation period normally lasts for a minimum of twelve weeks to allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves

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<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 6 of our equality scheme for further information on alternative formats of information we provide.

<sup>7</sup> Please see Appendix 3 for a list of our consultees.

as part of the process of forming a view. However, in exceptional circumstances when this timescale is not feasible (for example implementing EU Directives or UK wide legislation, technical regulatory matters, meeting Health and Safety requirements, addressing urgent public health matters or complying with Court judgements, we may shorten timescales to eight weeks or less before the policy is implemented. We may continue consultation thereafter and will review the policy as part of our monitoring commitments<sup>8</sup>.

Where, under these exceptional circumstances, we must implement a policy immediately, as it is beyond our control, we may consult after implementation of the policy in order to ensure that any impacts of the policy are considered.

3.2.7 If a consultation exercise is to take place over a period when consultees are less able to respond, for example, over the summer or Christmas break, or if the policy under consideration is particularly complex, we will give consideration to the feasibility of allowing a longer period for the consultation.

3.2.8 We have taken steps to increase access to our consultations. For those public facing consultations we have also provided our consultation documentation on the portal for public consultations in Northern Ireland, called Citizen Space.

We are conscious of the fact that affected individuals and representative groups may have different needs. We will take appropriate measures to ensure full participation in any meetings that are held. We will consider for example the time of day, the appropriateness of the venue, in particular whether it can be accessed by those with disabilities, how the meeting is to be conducted, the use of appropriate language, whether a signer and/or interpreter is necessary, and whether the provision of childcare and support for other carers is required.

3.2.9 We will include the following wording in all future consultations to ensure that opportunity is given for consultees to specifically focus on Section 75 issues.

*Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act places a duty on public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between different categories.*

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<sup>8</sup> Please see below at 4.27 to 4.31 for details on monitoring.

*Whilst every care has been taken in the drafting of this document to adhere to best practice in relation to Section 75, the Utility Regulator would very much value the input of its stakeholders and the communities with whom it endeavours to participate.*

*We aim to promote equality of opportunity between nine categories of persons, namely between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; and between persons with dependents and persons without.*

*As part of this consultation exercise we would like to determine whether any of the nine groups defined above are significantly affected, either positively or negatively, or does the policy under consideration create differential impacts between groups within each Section 75 category? Is this impact adverse or beneficial?*

*The Utility Regulator is keen to incorporate any recommendations received in this regard into its policy and will respond to contributors indicating what decisions it has made in respect of the consultation.*

*The consultation period is from XXXXX to XXXXX.*

3.2.10 We make all relevant information available to consultees in appropriate formats to ensure meaningful consultation. This includes detailed information on the policy proposal being consulted upon and any relevant quantitative and qualitative data.

3.2.11 In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, we take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy.

3.2.12 We provide feedback to consultees in a timely manner. A feedback report is prepared which includes summary information on the policy consulted upon, a summary of consultees' comments and a summary of our consideration of and response to consultees' input. The feedback is provided in formats suitable to consultees. (Please see also 6.3)

3.3 A list of our consultees is included in this equality scheme at Appendix 3. It can also be obtained from our website at [www.uregni.gov.uk](http://www.uregni.gov.uk) or by contacting

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14 Queen Street  
Belfast BT1 6ED  
Tel: 028 9031 6628  
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SMS: 07794 965909

3.4 Our consultation list is not exhaustive and is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it remains relevant to our functions and policies.

We welcome enquiries from any person/s or organisations wishing to be added to the list of consultees. Please contact Susan Lavery (as above) to provide your contact details and have your areas of interest noted or have your name/details removed or amended. Please also inform us at this stage if you would like information sent to you in a particular format or language.

## **Chapter 4      Our arrangements for assessing, monitoring and publishing the impact of policies**

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (b); Schedule 9 4. (2) (c); Schedule 9 4. (2) (d); Schedule 9 9. (1); Schedule 9 9.(2))

### **Our arrangements for assessing the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted on the promotion of equality of opportunity (Schedule 9 4. (2) (b))**

4.1 In the context of Section 75, ‘policy’ is very broadly defined and it covers all the ways in which we carry out, or propose to carry out, our functions in relation to Northern Ireland. In respect of this equality scheme, the term policy is used for any (proposed/amended/existing) strategy, policy initiative or practice and/or decision, whether written or unwritten and irrespective of the label given to it, e.g., ‘draft’, ‘pilot’, ‘high level’ or ‘sectoral’.

4.2 In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, we take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy, as required by Schedule 9 9. (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

4.3 We use the tools of **screening** and **equality impact assessment** to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. In carrying out these assessments we will relate them to the intended outcomes of the policy in question and will also follow Equality Commission guidance:

- the guidance on screening, including the screening template, as detailed in the Commission’s guidance ‘*Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)*’ and
- on undertaking an equality impact assessment as detailed in the Commission’s guidance ‘*Practical guidance on equality impact assessment (February 2005)*’.

### **Screening**

4.4 The purpose of screening is to identify those policies that are likely to have an impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations as per paragraph 3.2.9.

4.5 Screening is completed at the earliest opportunity in the policy development/review process. Policies which we propose to adopt will be subject to screening prior to implementation.

4.6 The lead role in the screening of a policy is taken by the policy decision maker who has the authority to make changes to that policy. However, screening will also involve other relevant team members, for example, Human Resources or other Corporate Affairs colleagues, those who implement the policy and staff members from other relevant work areas. Where appropriate we will include key stakeholders in the screening process.

4.7 The following questions are applied to all our policies as part of the screening process:

- What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? (minor/major/none)
- Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?
- To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? (minor/major/none)
- Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

4.8 In order to answer the screening questions, we gather as much relevant information and data, both qualitative and quantitative, as possible. In taking this evidence into account we consider the different needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 equality categories. Any screening decision will be informed by this evidence.

4.9 Completion of screening, taking into account our consideration of the answers to all four screening questions set out in 4.7 above, will lead to one of the following three outcomes:

1. the policy has been 'screened in' for equality impact assessment

2. the policy has been ‘screened out’ with mitigation<sup>9</sup> or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted
3. the policy has been ‘screened out’ without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.

4.10 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is ‘minor’ in respect of one, or more, of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we may on occasion decide to proceed with an equality impact assessment, depending on the policy. If an EQIA is not to be conducted we will nonetheless consider measures that might mitigate the policy impact as well as alternative policies that might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Where we mitigate we will outline in our screening template the reasons to support this decision together with the proposed changes, amendments or alternative policy.

This screening decision will be ‘signed off’ by the appropriate policy lead within The Utility Regulator.

4.11 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is ‘major’ in respect of one, or more, of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we will normally subject the policy to an equality impact assessment. This screening decision will be ‘signed off’ by the appropriate policy lead within the Utility Regulator.

4.12 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is ‘none’, in respect of all of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is ‘screened out’ as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, we will give details of the reasons for the decision taken. This screening decision will be ‘signed off’ by the appropriate policy lead within the Utility Regulator.

4.13 As soon as possible following the completion of the screening process, the screening template, signed off and approved by the senior manager responsible for the policy will be made available on our website, [www.uregni.gov.uk](http://www.uregni.gov.uk) and on request from  
Susan Lavery  
NI Authority for Utility Regulation

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<sup>9</sup> Mitigation – Where an assessment (screening in this case) reveals that a particular policy has an adverse impact on equality of opportunity and / or good relations, a public authority must consider ways of delivering the policy outcomes which have a less adverse effect on the relevant Section 75 categories.

Queens House  
14 Queen Street  
Belfast BT1 6ED  
Tel: 028 9031 6628  
Email: [susan.lavery@uregni.gov.uk](mailto:susan.lavery@uregni.gov.uk)  
SMS: 07794 965909

4.14 If a consultee, including the Equality Commission, raises a concern about a screening decision based on supporting evidence, we will review the screening decision.

4.15 Our screening reports are published quarterly [see below at 4.20 - 4.22 and 4.23 for details].

### **Equality impact assessment**

4.16 An EQIA is a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy, whether that policy is formal or informal, and irrespective of the scope of that policy. The primary function of an EQIA is to determine the extent of any impact of a policy upon the Section 75 categories and to determine if the impact is an adverse one. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate the likely positive outcomes of a policy and to seek ways to more effectively promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

Over the life of this scheme we will carry out EQIAs on those policy areas where the initial screening indicates that there is evidence of impact on the equality of opportunity or good relations duty within the terms of Section 75 of the Act. Where appropriate, a number of policies within a function may be grouped together for one assessment.

4.17 Once a policy is screened and screening has identified that an equality impact assessment is necessary, we will carry out the EQIA in accordance with Equality Commission guidance. The EQIA will be carried out as part of the policy development process, before the policy is implemented.

4.18 Any EQIA will be subject to consultation at the appropriate stage(s). Organisations included in the list in Appendix 3 will be consulted on our equality impact assessments. This list is not exhaustive. Additional bodies may be added during the lifetime of this scheme to reflect the establishment of new organisations. If other organisations wish to be added to this list they should contact the address on the front page of



this scheme. (For further detail see above Chapter 3 “Our Arrangements for Consulting”).

**Our arrangements for publishing the results of the assessments of the likely impact of policies we have adopted or propose to adopt on the promotion of equality of opportunity**  
(Schedule 9 4. (2) (d); Schedule 9 9. (1))

4.19 We make publicly available the results of our assessments (screening and EQIA) of the likely impact of our policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.

**What we publish**

4.20 Screening reports

These are published quarterly. Screening reports detail:

- All policies screened by the Utility Regulator over the three month period
- A statement of the aim(s) of the policy/policies to which the assessment relates
- Consideration given to measures which might mitigate any adverse impact
- Consideration given to alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity;
- Screening decisions, i.e.:
  - whether the policy has been ‘screened in’ for equality impact assessment.
  - whether the policy has been ‘screened out’ with mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.
  - whether the policy has been ‘screened out’ without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.
- Where applicable, a timetable for conducting equality impact assessments
- A link to the completed screening template(s) on our website

4.21 Screening templates

For details on the availability of our screening templates please refer to 4.13.

4.22 Equality impact assessments

EQIA reports are published once the impact assessment has been completed. These reports include:

- A statement of the aim of the policy assessed
- Information and data collected
- Details of the assessment of impact(s)
- Consideration given to measures which might mitigate any adverse impact
- Consideration given to alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity
- Consultation responses
- The decision taken
- Future monitoring plans.

### **How we publish the information**

4.23 All information we publish is accessible and can be made available in alternative formats on request. Please see 6.3 below.

### **Where we publish the information**

4.24 The results of our assessments (screening reports and completed templates, the results of equality impact assessments) are available on our website [www.uregni.gov.uk](http://www.uregni.gov.uk) or by contacting

Mr Ian Campbell  
Head of Corporate Services  
NI Authority for Utility Regulation  
Queens House  
14 Queen Street  
Belfast BT1 6ED  
Tel: 028 9031 6628  
Email: [ian.campbell@uregni.gov.uk](mailto:ian.campbell@uregni.gov.uk)  
SMS: 07794 965909

4.25 In addition to the above, screening reports (electronic link or hard copy on request if more suitable for recipients) which include all policies screened over a 3 month period are also sent directly to all consultees on a quarterly basis (where policies have been screened in that quarter).

4.26 We will inform the general public about the availability of this material through communications such as press releases where appropriate.

### **Our arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact of policies we have adopted on equality of opportunity**

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (c))

4.27 Monitoring can assist us to deliver better public services and continuous improvements. Monitoring Section 75 information involves the processing of sensitive personal data (data relating to the racial or ethnic origin of individuals, sexual orientation, political opinion, religious belief, etc). In order to carry out monitoring in a manner appropriate to the sensitivities of the data, we follow guidance from the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Equality Commission.

4.28 We monitor any adverse impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity of policies we have adopted. We are also committed to monitoring more broadly to identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations in line with Equality Commission guidance.

4.29 Systems established to monitor the impact of policies and identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations are:

- The collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant primary quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis
- The collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant secondary sources of quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis
- An audit of existing information systems within one year of approval of this equality scheme, to identify the extent of current monitoring and take action to address any gaps in order to have the necessary information on which to base decisions
- Undertaking or commissioning new data if necessary.

4.30 If over a two year period monitoring and evaluation show that a policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if

opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, we will ensure that the policy is revised to achieve better outcomes for relevant equality groups.

4.31 We review our EQIA monitoring information on an annual basis. Other monitoring information is also reviewed annually.

**Our arrangements for publishing the results of our monitoring**  
(Schedule 9 4. (2) (d))

4.32 Schedule 9 4. (2) (d) requires us to publish the results of the monitoring of adverse impacts of policies we have adopted. However, we are committed to monitoring more broadly and the results of our policy monitoring are published as follows:

4.33 EQIA monitoring information is published as part of our Section 75 annual progress report [see 2.7]

4.34 Results of our monitoring is also published on our website and through emails to consultees.

4.35 All information published is accessible and can be made available in alternative formats on request. Please see below at 6.3 for details.

## **Chapter 5      Staff training** (Schedule 9 4.(2) (e))

### **Commitment to staff training**

5.1 We recognise that awareness raising and training play a crucial role in the effective implementation of our Section 75 duties.

5.2 Our Chief Executive wishes to positively communicate the commitment of the Utility Regulator to the Section 75 statutory duties, both internally and externally.

To this end we maintain a communication and training programme for all staff and will ensure that our commitment to the Section 75 statutory duties is made clear in all relevant publications.

### **Training objectives**

5.3 We have an ongoing training plan for our staff which aims to achieve the following objectives:

- to raise awareness of the provisions of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, our equality scheme commitments and the particular issues likely to affect people across the range of Section 75 categories, to ensure that our staff fully understand their role in implementing the scheme
- to provide those staff involved in the assessment of policies (screening and EQIA) with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
- to provide those staff who deal with complaints in relation to compliance with our equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to investigate and monitor complaints effectively
- to provide those staff involved in consultation processes with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
- to provide those staff involved in the implementation and monitoring of the effective implementation of the Utility Regulator equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.

## **Awareness raising and training arrangements**

5.4 The following arrangements are in place to ensure all our staff and board members are aware of and understand our equality obligations.

- We will develop a summary of this equality scheme and make it available to all staff.
- We will provide access to copies of the full equality scheme for all staff; ensure that any queries or questions of clarification from staff are addressed effectively.
- Our Staff will receive a briefing on this equality scheme within three (3) months after approval of scheme. The Section 75 statutory duties form part of induction training for new staff.
- Focused training is provided for our key staff who are directly engaged in taking forward the implementation of our equality scheme commitments (for example those involved in research and data collection, policy development, service design, conducting equality impact assessments, consultation, monitoring and evaluation).
- Where appropriate, training will be provided to ensure staff are aware of the issues experienced by the range of Section 75 groups.
- When appropriate and on an ongoing basis, arrangements will be made to ensure staff are kept up to date with Section 75 developments.

5.5 Training and awareness raising programmes will, where relevant, be developed in association with the appropriate Section 75 groups and our staff.

In order to share resources and expertise, we will, where possible, work closely with other bodies and agencies in the development and delivery of training.

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

5.6 Our training programme is subject to the following monitoring and evaluation arrangements:

- We evaluate the extent to which all participants in this training programme have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve each of the above objectives.

- The extent to which training objectives have been met will be reported on as part of the Section 75 annual progress report, which will be sent to the Equality Commission.

## **Chapter 6      Our arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services we provide**

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (f))

6.1 We are committed to ensuring that the information we disseminate and the services we provide are fully accessible to all parts of the community in Northern Ireland. We keep our arrangements under review to ensure that this remains the case.

6.2 We are aware that some groups will not have the same access to information as others.

In particular:

- People with sensory, learning, communication and mobility disabilities may require printed information in other formats.
- Members of ethnic minority groups, whose first language is not English, may have difficulties with information provided only in English.
- Children and young people may not be able to fully access or understand information.

### **Access to information**

6.3 To ensure equality of opportunity in accessing information, we provide information in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable. Where the exact request cannot be met we will ensure a reasonable alternative is provided.

We, through the consultation process will liaise with representatives of young people and disability and minority ethnic organisations and takes account of existing and developing good practice.

We will respond to requests for information in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within three (3) working days.

6.4 In disseminating information through the media we will seek to advertise in the press where appropriate.

### **Access to services**

6.6 We are committed to ensuring that all of our services are fully accessible to everyone in the community across the Section 75 categories.



We also adhere to the relevant provisions of current anti-discrimination legislation.

### **Assessing public access to information and services**

6.7 We monitor quarterly across all our functions, in relation to access to information and services, to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted.

6.8 Monitoring will be undertaken of all requests for information in alternative formats along with time taken and ability to meet these requests.

## **Chapter 7      Timetable for measures we propose in this equality scheme**

**(Schedule 9 4. (3) (b))**

7.1 Appendix 4 outlines our timetable for all measures proposed within this equality scheme. The measures outlined in this timetable will be incorporated into our business planning processes.

7.2 This timetable is different from and in addition to our commitment to developing action plans/action measures to specifically address inequalities and further promote equality of opportunity and good relations. We have included in our equality scheme a commitment to develop an action plan. Accordingly, this commitment it is listed in the timetable of measures at Appendix 4. For information on these action measures please see above at 2.11 – 2.18.

## **Chapter 8      Our complaints procedure** (Schedule 9 10.)

8.1 We are responsive to the views of members of the public. We will endeavour to resolve all complaints made to us in respect of our Equality Scheme.

8.2 Schedule 9 paragraph 10 of the Act refers to complaints. A person can make a complaint to a public authority if the complainant believes he or she may have been directly affected by an alleged failure of the authority to comply with its approved equality scheme.

If the complaint has not been resolved within a reasonable timescale, the complaint can be brought to the Equality Commission.

8.3 A person wishing to make a complaint that we have failed to comply with our approved equality scheme should contact:

Susan Lavery  
NI Authority for Utility Regulation  
Queens House  
14 Queen Street  
Belfast BT1 6ED  
Tel: 028 9031 6628  
Email: [susan.lavery@uregni.gov.uk](mailto:susan.lavery@uregni.gov.uk)  
SMS: 07794 965909

8.4 We will in the first instance acknowledge receipt of each complaint within three days.

8.5 We will carry out an internal investigation of the complaint and will respond substantively to the complainant within one (1) month of the date of receiving the letter of complaint. Under certain circumstances, if the complexity of the matter requires a longer period, the period for response to the complainant may be extended to two (2) months. In those circumstances, the complainant will be advised of the extended period within one month of making the complaint.

8.6 During this process the complainant will be kept fully informed of the progress of the investigation into the complaint and of any outcomes.

8.7 In any subsequent investigation by the Equality Commission, we will co-operate fully, providing access in a timely manner to any relevant documentation that the Equality Commission may require.

Similarly, we will co-operate fully with any investigation by the Equality Commission under sub-paragraph 11 (1) (b) of Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

8.8 We will make all efforts to implement promptly and in full any recommendations arising out of any Equality Commission investigation.

## Chapter 9      **Publication of our equality scheme** (Schedule 9 4. (3) (c))

9.1 Our equality scheme is available free of charge in print form and alternative formats from:

Susan Lavery  
The Utility Regulator  
Queens House  
14 Queen Street  
Belfast BT1 6ED  
Tel: 028 9031 6628  
Email: [susan.lavery@uregni.gov.uk](mailto:susan.lavery@uregni.gov.uk)  
SMS: 07794 965909

9.2 Our equality scheme is also available on our website at [www.uregni.gov.uk](http://www.uregni.gov.uk)

9.3 The following arrangements are in place for the publication in a timely manner of our equality scheme to ensure equality of access:

- We will make every effort to communicate widely the existence and content of our equality scheme. This may include press releases, prominent advertisements in the press, the internet and direct mail shots to groups representing the various categories in Section 75.
- We will email a link to our approved equality scheme to our consultees on our consultation lists. Other consultees without e-mail will be notified by letter that the scheme is available on request. We will respond to requests for the equality scheme in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within three (3) working days.
- Our equality scheme is available on request in alternative formats and in minority languages to meet the needs of those not fluent in English.
- We will liaise with representative groups and experts in response to specific requests for special communication of the scheme to children and young people and people with disabilities

9.4 For a list of our stakeholders and consultees please see Appendix 3 of the equality scheme, visit our website at [www.uregni.gov.uk](http://www.uregni.gov.uk) or contact

Susan Lavery

NI Authority for Utility Regulation

Queens House

14 Queen Street

Belfast BT1 6ED

Tel: 028 9031 6628

Email: [susan.lavery@uregni.gov.uk](mailto:susan.lavery@uregni.gov.uk)

## **Chapter 10    Review of our equality scheme**

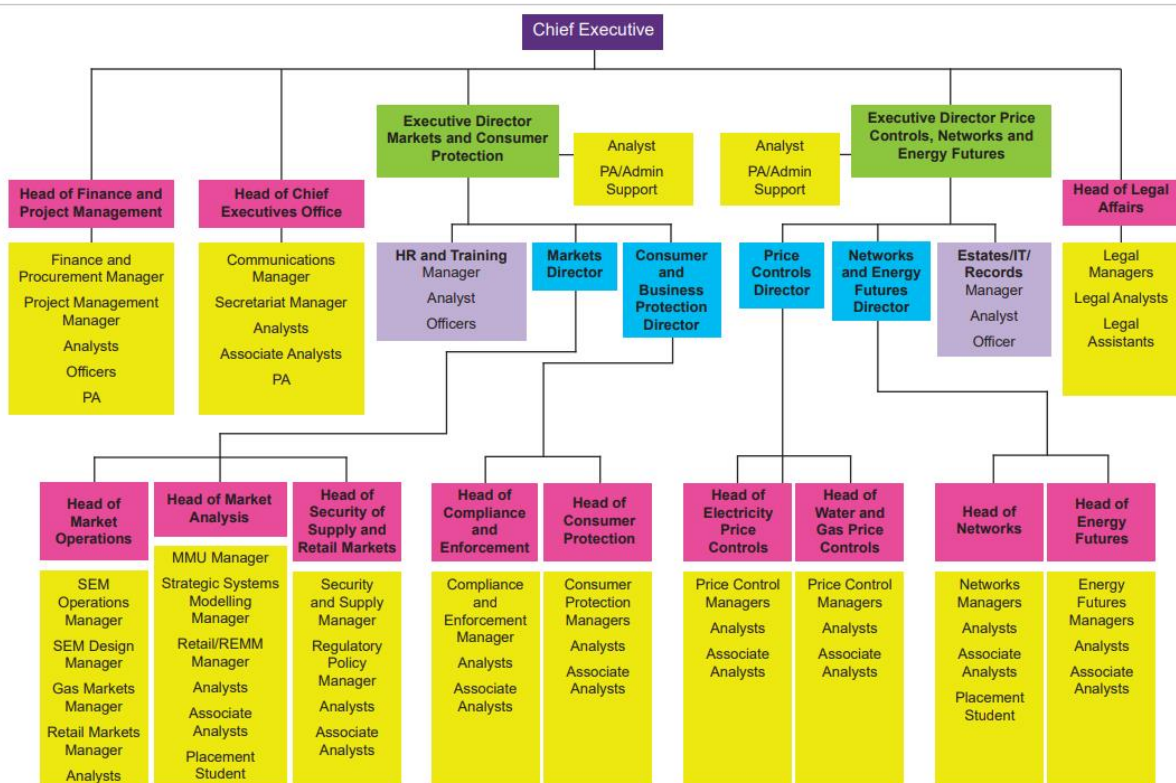
(Schedule 9 8. (3))

10.1 As required by Schedule 9 paragraph 8 (3) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 we will conduct a thorough review of this equality scheme. This review will take place either within five years of submission of this equality scheme to the Equality Commission or within a shorter timescale to allow alignment with the review of other planning cycles.

The review will evaluate the effectiveness of our scheme in relation to the implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties relevant to our functions in Northern Ireland.

10.2 In undertaking this review we will follow any guidance issued by the Equality Commission. A report of this review will be made public on our website ([www.uregni.gov.uk](http://www.uregni.gov.uk)) and sent to the Equality Commission.

# Appendix 1 Organisational chart





## Appendix 2 Example groups relevant to the Section 75 categories for Northern Ireland purposes

*Please note, this list is for illustration purposes only, it is not exhaustive.*

Category	Example groups
Religious belief	Buddhist; Catholic; Hindu; Jewish; Muslims, people of no religious belief; Protestants; Sikh; other faiths.  For the purposes of Section 75, the term “religious belief” is the same definition as that used in the <i>Fair Employment &amp; Treatment (NI) Order</i> <sup>10</sup> . Therefore, “religious belief” also includes any <i>perceived</i> religious belief (or perceived lack of belief) and, in employment situations only, it also covers any “ <i>similar philosophical belief</i> ”.
Political opinion <sup>11</sup>	Nationalist generally; Unionists generally; members/supporters of other political parties.
Racial group	Black people; Chinese; Indians; Pakistanis; people of mixed ethnic background; Polish; Roma; Travellers; White people.
Men and women generally	Men (including boys); Trans-gendered people; Transsexual people; women (including girls).
Marital status	Civil partners or people in civil partnerships; divorced people; married people; separated people; single people; widowed people, people living with partners.
Age	Children and young people; older people.
Persons with a disability	Persons with disabilities as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
Persons with dependants	Persons with personal responsibility for the care of a child; for the care of a person with a disability; or the care of a dependant older person.
Sexual orientation	Bisexual people; heterosexual people; gay or lesbian people.

<sup>10</sup> See Section 98 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which states: “*In this Act...“political opinion” and “religious belief” shall be construed in accordance with Article 2(3) and (4) of the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998.*”

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*

## **Appendix 3 List of consultees**

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (a))

Action Renewables  
Advice NI  
AES  
Age NI  
Airtricity  
Antrim and Newtownabbey Council  
Armagh and Banbridge Craigavon Council  
Beers Engineering  
Belfast City Council  
Bord Gais  
Bryson Energy  
Budget Energy  
Business in the Community  
Centrica  
Christians Against Poverty (CAPUK)  
Citizens Advice  
Commission for Older People for NI (COPNI)  
Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU)  
Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU)  
Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)  
Confederation of British Industry (CBI)  
Consumer Council NI  
CWA  
Dept for Communities  
Dept for Infrastructure  
Dept for the Economy  
Dept of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)  
EirGrid  
Electric Ireland  
Energia  
Energy Institute, NI Branch  
Energy Savings Trust  
Entech  
Equality Commission NI  
ESB  
firmus energy  
Flogas  
Fusion Heating  
Gaelectric Developments  
Gas Networks

GMO NI  
Go Power  
Homeseal NI  
Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)  
Macmillan Cancer Support  
Manufacturing NI  
Mason Hayes & Curran  
Mencap  
Mutual Energy Limited  
National Energy Action NI (NEA NI)  
NI Chamber of Commerce & Industry  
NI Housing Executive  
NI Local Government Association (NILGA)  
NI Oil  
NI Renewables Industry Group (NIRIG)  
NI Water  
NICCY  
NIE Networks  
North Down Development Organisation (NDDO)  
Phoenix Natural Gas  
PIMR  
PINERGY  
Power NI  
Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
Renewable Energy International  
RES Group  
SDLP  
SGN Natural Gas  
SONI Ltd  
SSE  
SSE Airtricity  
SSE Renewables  
Tynagh Energy  
Ulster Farmers' Union  
Ulster Scots Heritage Council  
University College Dublin  
University of Ulster  
Vayu Limited  
Viridian Energy Supply Ltd (Energia)  
Viridian Group  
Warmfill Limited  
Workspace

## Appendix 4 Timetable for measures proposed (Schedule 9 4.(3) (b))

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Lead responsibility</b>	<b>Timetable</b>
<i>Section 75 Annual Progress Report [2.7]</i>	<i>HR Manager / Chief Executive</i>	<i>31 August (annually)</i>
<i>Action plan</i>		
<i>Consultation on draft action plan [2.15]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>[in line with consultation on equality scheme]</i>
<i>Finalised action plan published [2.18]</i>	<i>HR Manager / Chief Executive</i>	<i>December 2023</i>
<i>Arrangements for monitoring progress in place [2.16]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
<i>Consultation list reviewed and updated [3.4]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>July (annually)</i>
<i>Screening timetable [4.4]</i>	<i>Policy Lead</i>	<i>According to policy development timetable</i>
<i>Screening Reports [4.15]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>July (and quarterly thereafter)</i>
<i>EQIA timetable [4.16]</i>	<i>Policy Lead</i>	<i>According to policy development timetable</i>
<i>Monitoring</i>		
<i>Review of monitoring information [4.31]</i>	<i>Head of Corporate Services</i>	<i>April annually</i>
<i>Publication of monitoring information [4.33;4.34]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>September (annually)</i>
<i>Training</i>		
<i>Development of summary scheme[5.4]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>Within three (3) months of original scheme approval</i>

<i>Development of overall training programme [5.5]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>by ECNI</i> <i>September (annually)</i>
<i>Focussed training [5.4]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>Within three (3) months of original scheme approval by ECNI</i>
<i>Update training [5.4]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>As required (at least annually)</i>
<i>Evaluation of training [5.6]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>August (annually)</i>
<i>Assessing access to information and services [6.7]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>August (annually)</i>
<i>Communication of equality scheme [9.3]</i>	<i>Head of Corporate Services</i>	<i>Within one month of original scheme and revised scheme approval by ECNI</i>
<i>Notification of consultees [9.3]</i>	<i>Head of Corporate Services</i>	<i>Within one month of original scheme and revised scheme approval by ECNI</i>
<i>Review of equality scheme [10.1]</i>	<i>HR Manager / Chief Executive</i>	<i>Informally every year formal review 2017 and every 5 years thereafter</i>

## **Appendix 5 Glossary of terms**

ACER = Agency for the Co-operation of Energy Regulators

CAG = Common Arrangements for Gas

CPM = Capacity Payment Mechanism

FWP = Forward Work Plan

GSS = Guaranteed Service Standards

SAP = Social Action Plan

SEM = Single Electricity Market

The Third Package (also known as IME3) is a European Union framework for competition in the energy sector to be achieved through consumer choice, fairer prices, cleaner energy and security of supply.

## Appendix 6 Action plan/action measures

An Audit of Inequalities undertaken in Autumn 2010 and has been reviewed annually in line with the Annual Report. The audit highlighted the main themes we will concentrate on over the life of this Scheme to be Age, Disability and Communication (access to information).

The Corporate Strategy, Forward Work Plan and Social Action Plan are established plans which have been consulted upon extensively with the people and organisations listed in Appendix 3.

The areas identified for inclusion in the Action Plan are:

- Protecting consumers by ensuring utility monopolies act efficiently (Age and Disability themes);
- Environmental sustainability and security of supply (Age and Disability themes);
- Protecting vulnerable consumers (Age, Disability and Communication themes);
- Boosting competition in wholesale and retail markets (Age, Disability and Communication themes);
- Harmonising energy markets and use of infrastructure (Age, Disability and Communication themes);
- Evolving our regulatory framework (Age, Disability and Communication themes);
- Utility Regulator organisational performance and development (Communication theme).

Action	How	Responsibility	When
Protection of consumers through effective regulation of monopoly utility companies by applying our regulatory scrutiny to drive efficiencies and promote enhanced level of services	Embedding of equality considerations into the development of Price Controls, Guaranteed Service Standards (GSS) and Tariff Reviews	Consumer and Business Protection; Price Controls; Markets; and Networks and Energy Futures directorates.	Ongoing

<p>The promotion of sustainability and security of supply through working with utility companies to take account of the environmental impact of the services they provide</p>	<p>Implementation of Fuel Security Code requirements in Northern Ireland;  Implementation arrangements for all island security of supply;  Monitoring and, where necessary, reviewing the NI Sustainable Energy Programme;  Implementation of changes arising from the Renewable Energy Directive</p>	<p>Consumer and Business Protection;  Price Controls;  Markets; and  Networks and Energy Futures directorates.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Protecting vulnerable customers by implementing initiatives emanating from our Social Action Plan</p>	<p>Undertake research into the optimal content and format of customers bills;  Ensure Third Package requirements in this area are implemented;  Produce and implement a debt code of practice for energy suppliers;  Devise, populate and distribute a Third Package required Consumer Checklist;  Develop Smart Metering to include a trial for customers vulnerable to the effects of fuel poverty and an interim report</p>	<p>Consumer and Business Protection;  Price Controls;  Markets; and  Networks and Energy Futures directorates.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Further advancement of retail and wholesale competition to promote the interests of consumers</p>	<p>Implementation of Third Package policies to ensure customers have clarity in their choice of energy supplier;  Implementation long term electricity</p>	<p>Networks, Wholesale and Retail directorates</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>



	switching processes to enhance competition; Ensure all necessary preparations are achieved to manage new supplier entry and ensure customer protection		
Harmonization arrangements to deliver benefits for Northern Ireland consumers	Finalising business rules of Common Arrangements for Gas Code on the island of Ireland; Implementation of review processes for the Capacity Payment Mechanism (CPM) Medium Term Review; Progressing ongoing issues via the Harmonisation Working Group and Harmonisation Steering Group; Monitoring and investigating the Single Electricity Market (SEM) to mitigate the potential abuse of market power and enforcing the bidding Code of Practice	Consumer and Business Protection; Price Controls; Markets; and Networks and Energy Futures directorates.	Ongoing
Greater focus on the wider European legislative context, ensuring that we – in conjunction with statutory partners – expeditiously implement relevant legislation and effectively represent the views of	Ensure appropriate access to the Agency for the Co-operation of Energy Regulators (ACER) and input into European energy policy including network codes as they are drafted; Implementation of all relevant aspects of Energy Bill; Produce a paper on Financing	Consumer and Business Protection; Price Controls; Markets; and Networks and Energy Futures directorates.	Ongoing

Northern Ireland consumers	Networks; Implementation of IME 3 (Third Energy Package)		
Continuing to develop as an organisation	Develop, consult on and publish a new Corporate Strategy 2024-29	CEO's Office	2023