



**Northern Ireland
Fire & Rescue Service**

Annual Progress Report on Section 75 Implementation

for the period

1 April 2007 – 31 March 2008

June 2008

Equality Unit
NIFRS Headquarters

EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
Public Authority 2007 - 2008
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 2007 to 31 March 2008**. This template also includes a number of questions regarding implementation of Section 49A of the DDO from the **1 July 2007 to 31 March 2008**. 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 **30 September 2008**.

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

Name of public authority (Enter details below)

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS)

Equality Officer (Enter name and contact details below)

S75:

Adèle Davidson
Equality Manager
Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters
Equality Unit
1 Seymour Street
Lisburn BT27 4SX
Tel: 028 9260 0457
Email: adele.davidson@nifrs.org

DDO (if different from above):

As 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 Equality & Diversity agenda is embedded into our core functions, with clear commitment given in the NIFRS Core Values and Priorities & Targets. As reported to ECNI in previous Section 75 Annual Progress Reports, much of the work carried out across our Directorates is well established in respect of community outreach and mainstreaming equality in our service delivery and for our staff.
- In recognition of the importance of fulfilling our Statutory Duty, resources were made available for the appointment of a Diversity Officer. This was approved in the previous reporting year, with the post being created to strengthen the Equality Unit team. The successful appointment of a Diversity Officer was welcomed in September 2007, during the current reporting year. The post is at managerial Senior Officer level, with responsibility for taking forward Section 75, outreach and awareness-raising initiatives, training and promoting Diversity and Good Relations.
- Interagency co-operation on service delivery and working in partnership with other organisations continued with the aim of reducing the numbers of death and injuries as a result of emergency incidents. This approach extended to all sections of the community in Northern Ireland.
- The Community Development strategy, as reported in previous Section 75 Annual Progress Reports, continued to be implemented with the dissemination of multi-lingual fire safety literature and implementation of key youth initiatives. Notably, in the current reporting period, focus was also placed on service delivery, recruitment and retention issues for people with disabilities.
- The NIFRS Five Year Disability Action Plan was approved by the Service Support Committee of the NIFRS Board and submitted to ECNI by the due date.

- Policy development and review work took place on Transfer policy for Operational Personnel, Corporate Procurement Strategy and Policy, Short Term Temporary Promotions Agreement for Operational Staff, Retirement Policy and Resourcing Community Fire Safety Activities Policy,
- The comprehensive review of the Code of Procedures on Recruitment & Selection continued throughout the reporting year.
- We joined the Employers Forum on Disability to maximise opportunities for consultation and access to people with disabilities and also good practice and guidance.
- 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?
- Design of a standardised template of outreach materials in support of Retained (Part Time) Firefighter recruitment. We find it difficult to recruit for Retained fire station areas on occasion. This is due to the requirement for Retained Firefighters to live and work near the station and be able to respond within 5 minutes to that station in response to an emergency call. In accordance with our Code of Procedures on Recruitment & Selection, vacancies for Retained Firefighters are advertised in the local press. However, it has been proven that heightened awareness in local communities of our recruitment campaigns encourages a higher applicant flow. The Equality Unit wants to further exploit this activity by ensuring fair and compliant distribution of materials to businesses, organisations, groups and residential areas. Also, the materials will be designed in support of our commitment to increase representation in our workforce from under-represented groups.
- Publicity will take place in the coming year specifically involving our first female Retained Firefighter to be substantively promoted and also our Retained Firefighter who is Polish.

- The new Department for Communities & Local Government national 2008-2018 Equality & Diversity Strategy for Fire & Rescue Services in the UK has now been published and will be live in the coming year. This Strategy recommends challenging targets for gender and race diversity in Fire & Rescue Services in terms of job applicant and appointment rates. In addition to mainstreaming Equality under our Equality Scheme, we will be developing a similar NIFRS Equality & Diversity Strategy in support of government requirements. It is our intention to engage with ECNI on its development.
- As reported in the Progress Report for 1 April 2006 - 31 March 2007, Section 75 review of new national Firefighter Point of Entry tests is due to take place. This has not commenced due to ongoing discussion around implementation. It is anticipated the tests will be implemented for Wholetime Trainee Firefighter recruitment to be scheduled for late 2008, date to be confirmed.
- An Equality & Diversity Forum has been established, chaired by an NIFRS Board Member. This Forum will advise the NIFRS Board, through the relevant Committee, on equality and diversity matters. The Forum will also be interested in the promotion of Good Relations with stakeholders and the community in general. Representation on the Forum will be corporate, rather than confined to the Human Resources discipline and senior Trade Union representatives will also participate. The inaugural meeting of the Forum is imminent, meeting on a quarterly basis thereafter.
- We are participating as a major sponsor of the 'Belfast Mela' festival to be held on 24 August 2008 at Botanic Gardens, Belfast. The Mela is the biggest multi-cultural festival in Northern Ireland and we will have a comprehensive outreach and community safety stand at the event.
- The Newtownards Safety Centre will be available for public booking in the coming year. The Safety Centre is a purpose built educational resource environment equipped with the latest technology and designed to enhance public knowledge of fire safety. The Centre will provide an interactive learning experience to educate community groups about all aspects of fire.

- We plan our attendance at the Disability Action ‘Disability Exhibition 2008’ in June 2008, Lisburn Leisureplex.
- Implementation of the government ‘Workable’ Programme to provide employment for adults with disabilities will be given full consideration in the coming year, as part of our Disability Action Plan.
- Preparatory Equality Impact Assessment work will commence in the coming year in relation to the potential relocation in 2012 of our Training Centre to a co-located facility at Cookstown. This facility is proposed to be shared with the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Prison Service.
- We will be reviewing the Joint Declaration of Protection agreed in 1998 between the Fire Authority and the Representative Bodies. This is with a view to updating our protocols on harmonious working environments to that of ‘shared spaces’.
- 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"> • In house Equality and diversity training content updated to reflect changes in legislation and adapted to meet needs of different staff groups. Training covers Section 75 and also dignity at work issues. Staff are more aware of their obligations in this area and this is evident in how local issues are being managed 	
Persons of different political opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above 	
Persons of different racial groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above. In respect of Good Relations outreach, during the reporting period NIFRS engaged with ArtsEkta regarding key sponsorship of the Belfast Mela multi-cultural event. 	

Persons of different age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age limits removed from application criteria for Firefighter posts 	
Persons with different marital status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No identifiable change 	
Persons of different sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NIFRS supported Avon Fire & Rescue Service equality conference on LGBT issues in the Fire Service. This event provided access to strategies, training and networking opportunities for future partnership working in this area. In house training has been updated to reflect changes to legislation. 	
Men and women generally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the reporting period specific gender outreach materials targeted at women were under development. The purpose of this is to encourage females to consider the Fire & Rescue Service as a viable career option in an environment in which they would feel empowered and valued. 	
Persons with and without a disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NIFRS Disability Action Plan was approved and actions identified for the next 5 years. 	
Persons with and without dependants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible working requests were approved throughout the year for all categories of staff. 	

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 2007-08.

(Enter text below)

- The NIFRS Vision, Mission and Values were revisited and stated in our Priorities & Targets for 2007-2012 and Annual Business Plan for 2007-2008. Our commitment to equality and diversity is clearly stated in our ‘Core Values’, stating our commitment to:
 - People – we value keeping our people safe and well trained
 - Leadership – we value leading by example
 - Teamwork – we value working together
 - Integrity – we value the utmost integrity in everything we do
 - Diversity – we value equality and fairness and we consider the needs of our staff and the community we serve
 - Communication – we value open and honest communication with our staff and with all our stakeholders
 - Partnership – we value working in partnership
 - Pursuit of Excellence – we value continuous improvement at all levels of our organisation
- ‘Supporting our People’ continues to be one of 6 key strategic themes under our Priorities and Targets for 2007-2012. The aim of this strategic theme refers to ‘providing a well equipped, skilful and highly motivated workforce, able to work safely and whose composition reflects the diverse community that we serve.’
- ‘The high-level strategic objective with regard to ‘Supporting our People’ is to ‘ensure further progress on equality and diversity through the promotion of cultural change within NIFRS’.
- The associated equality and good relations tasks are outlined in our Business Plan for 2007-2008:

Action	Progress to date
Monitor and report on the equality agenda internally (quarterly) and externally (annually)	Quarterly reports on stations identified for close monitoring (Voluntary Undertaking) and Section 75 workforce profile established. Equality Manager reports to Board Service Support Committee and full Board as required. Equality &

	Diversity Forum established to meet on quarterly basis. External reporting on equality agenda already embedded through annual submission of statutory reports to ECNI by prescribed deadlines.
Establish external consultee group in relation to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.	The existing list of external consultees has been updated. Membership of the Employers Forum on Disability and the Opportunity Now Campaign has enabled us to network and establish links with external groups. We have a formal internal Consultation Group, chaired by the Corporate Communications Manager and the Equality Manager sits on this Group.
Ensure all staff have received diversity awareness training through a range of planned initiatives in disability, age and gender	Training on equality and diversity continued during the reporting period. In-house training is delivered to uniformed middle-management, incorporating the learning outcomes under the Equality and Dignity module of the Integrated Personal Development System for firefighter staff. Equality and fairness training is covered at induction level for all trainee firefighters. A programme of awareness training for Wholetime staff began in January 2008, commencing with staff from stations within Eastern Area Command and Area Command HQ environment.
Take action to ensure that by 2010 at least 10% of all new Firefighter Trainee intakes are women by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ensuring recruitment campaigns include 	Progress remains on target. During the year we experienced increased female applicant flow and appointment rates for a number of our Retained Trainee Firefighter vacancies. Specific gender

<p>specific gender outreach; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ implementing NIFRS Gender Action Plan	<p>outreach materials are used, in addition to female firefighters being routinely present at careers events, school talks and in TV, radio and press promotions.</p> <p>Encouragingly, we had our first female 'Top Trainee' at the February 2008 Graduation Ceremony for Wholetime Trainee Firefighters. This warranted extensive press coverage in all regional daily papers, local papers, BBC Northern Ireland and UTV interviews and packages aired for all radio stations and Fire Trade press, managed by our Corporate Communications Department.</p> <p>A range of testimonials and quotes from female firefighters were obtained during the year for use in careers packs for schools.</p> <p>A new corporate bank of photography for NIFRS included images for use in materials for outreach to females and minority ethnic groups.</p> <p>We further raised the profile of our female firefighters through the participation of one of our female firefighter staff in an Irish language interview for BBC radio. This individual also featured in a 'Day in the Life Of' feature in the Andersonstown News.</p>
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Develop and implement statutory NIFRS Disability Action Plan	On target. Disability Action Plan approved and published. Summary of Disability Action Plan issued to all staff with covering letter from Chief Fire Officer.
Carry out organisation-wide monitoring exercise covering all equality dimension and update appropriate databases.	On target. The Equality Manager and Diversity Officer met with ECNI representatives to discuss monitoring, in light of revised ECNI Monitoring Guidance. Proformas for data collection have been developed for an organisation-wide exercise in the coming year.
Establish an Equality Forum with the representative bodies	Complete. An Equality and Diversity Forum, chaired by an NIFRS Board Member, has been established and its first meeting is imminent.

Section 2: Screening

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

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>Yes/No</u>	Is policy being subject to EQIA? <u>Yes/No</u> ? If yes indicate year for assessment.
Revised Short Term Temporary Promotions Agreement	R	No* Minor amendments made to policy in respect of disability equality	No
Voluntary Transfer Policy for those in the roles of Firefighter/Firefighter (Control)	R	No* Minor amendments made to policy in respect of disability equality	No

Voluntary Transfer Policy for those in the roles of Crew Commander/Crew Commander (Control) to Area Commander including Crew Commander (Control) to Assistant Group Commander (Control)	R	No* Minor amendments made to policy in respect of disability equality	No
Retirement Policy	R	No	No
Policy on Resourcing Community Fire Safety Activities	R	No	No
Corporate Procurement Strategy and Procurement Policy	R	No	No

- The Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan for 2008-2009 was subject to a 12 week broad consultation exercise during 1 November 2007 – 31 January 2008, widely advertised both internally and externally, targeting all our major stakeholders and staff. The consultation documents also contained questions directly relating to Section 75 and also Rural Proofing issues. The Draft Road Safety Strategy was also subject to a similar 12 week consultation period during 1 January 2008 and 24 March 2008.

Section 3: Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

- Please provide an update of policies subject to EQIA during 2007/08, stage 7 EQIA monitoring activities and an indicative EQIA timetable for 2008-09.

EQIA Timetable – April 2007 - March 2008

- No policies were subject to EQIA during the reporting period.
- Where the EQIA timetable for 2007/08 (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.

(Enter text below)

Not applicable

Ongoing EQIA Monitoring Activities April 2007- March 2008

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
Standby arrangements for Officers on the Flexible Duty System (Based at FRSHQ, FRSTC, District and Area Headquarters) Results of EQIA published in October 2007	Reduced	Reduced

2008-09 EQIA Time-table

Title of EQIAs due to be commenced during April 2008 – March 2009	Existing or New policy?	Please indicate expected timescale of Decision Making stage i.e. Stage 6
National Point of Entry Tests for New Entrant Firefighters	New	Commencement date for this EQIA should be determined mid-2008. Decision still to be taken.

- Preparatory work is scheduled to commence in advance of an EQIA on the co-location of shared training facilities with PSNI and the Prison Service in 2012.

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.

(Enter text below)

Training	No's attended	Evaluation and Conclusions
<p>'Safe to Manage' diversity awareness training for uniformed middle management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21/05/07 • 19/11/07 • 18/02/08 • 21/01/08 • 18/05/08 	31	<p><u>Positive feedback from attendees:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "Found all parts of the training useful. Effective delivery of training." ◆ "All sections of the course were useful, due to my lack of input in this area in the past." <p><u>Negative feedback from attendees:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Not applicable.
<p>Equality and Fairness Induction Training for Wholetime Trainee Firefighters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17/10/07 	20	<p><u>Positive feedback from attendees:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "Very informative, well presented." ◆ "Reassuring that NIFRS has such stringent equality and diversity policies." ◆ "Thanks for the excellent talk." ◆ "Clarification on politically correct terms." ◆ "Equality from a female perspective most useful part of training." <p><u>Negative feedback from attendees:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "Legislation part was least useful, boring." ◆ "Too long on certain topics." ◆ "Information on ethnic groups least useful."

Training	No's attended	Evaluation and Conclusions
<p>Continued...</p> <p>Equality and Fairness Induction Training for Retained Trainee Firefighters based at stations in Western Area Command</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21/10/07 	<p>19</p>	<p><u>Other comments and suggestions from staff for future training delivery</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “Further training on Harassment reporting procedure would be beneficial.” ◆ “Would like more coverage on terminology and diversity language.” ◆ “Would like more coverage on policies, discipline, bullying etc.” <p><u>Positive feedback from attendees:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “Found disability discussion and how to speak with anyone who is different to me useful.” ◆ “Most of the information provided today was all new and has left me more open minded.” ◆ “I have learned a lot from the instructor and the information today. Thank you, I will look at life differently now.” <p><u>Negative feedback from attendees:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “Found dates of Acts least useful.” <p><u>Other comments and suggestions from staff for future training delivery</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Would have liked more coverage on treatment with regards to equal pay.”

Training	No's attended	Evaluation and Conclusions
<p>Equality and Fairness Induction Training for Retained Trainee Firefighters based at Carryduff Station</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27/10/07 	<p>9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “Help in the future if community work takes us to different areas.” ◆ “Would have liked more statistics.” ◆ “More coverage on topics such as disability and diversity factors.” <p><u>Positive feedback from attendees:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “Found disability discussion and language gave a correct way to identify people.” ◆ “Very clear and to the point. Informative.” ◆ “Found everything useful, as unaware of a lot of the issues.” ◆ ”It was all good for me and enjoyed it all.” ◆ “Very well presented and useful.” ◆ “Correct terminology so as not to cause offence – was useful” <p><u>Negative feedback from attendees:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Not applicable. <p><u>Other comments and suggestions from staff for future training delivery</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “Updated on any changes to the legislation.”

Training	No's attended	Evaluation and Conclusions
Equality and Fairness Induction Training for Retained Trainee Firefighters based at stations in Western Area Command <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11/11/07 	11	<u>Positive feedback from attendees:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “Very helpful and informative.” ◆ “Information on race and on disability most useful.” ◆ “Very informative and eye-opener in the various subjects.” <u>Negative feedback from attendees:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Not applicable. <u>Other comments and suggestions from staff for future training delivery</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “Would have liked more detailed coverage on procedures.” ◆ “disability part most useful.”
Equality and Fairness Induction Training for Retained Trainee Firefighters based at Ballymoney Station <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14/11/07 	9	<u>Positive feedback from attendees:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “Everything was useful because I now have a wider knowledge of how the Service works.” ◆ “I found all of it very informative.” ◆ “Helped me to understand more about ethnic minorities and different types of disabilities.”

Training	No's attended	Evaluation and Conclusions
<p>Equality and Fairness Induction Training for Firefighter (Control) Trainees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27/09/07 • 04/12/07 	<p>8</p>	<p><u>Negative feedback from attendees:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “Found part of religious belief part of common sense.” ◆ “I found all of it very informative.” ◆ “I feel everthing was covered and my folder will useful to revert to.” <p><u>Positive feedback from attendees:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “Found advice on reporting incidents to chain of command useful.” ◆ “Well developed with good handouts and good examples.” ◆ “Quizzes relevant and interesting. Examples relevant. Delivery articulate and knowledgeable – easy to listen to and understand.” <p><u>Negative feedback from attendees:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Not applicable <p><u>Other comments and suggestions from staff for future training delivery</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “Would have liked more up to date scenarios relating to Control Centre.” ◆ “Reminder sessions after a year/2 years.”

Training	No's attended	Evaluation and Conclusions
<p>Fairness & Equality and Dignity in the Workplace Training for Wholetime Station and Area Command HQ staff (programme commencing with Eastern Area)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17/01/08 • 24/01/08 • 29/01/08 • 05/02/08 	<p>243</p>	<p><u>Positive feedback from attendees:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “Professionally delivered with a touch of humour.” ◆ “Delivery was informative. There was a good informal atmosphere making it easy to ask questions and discuss.” ◆ “Found scenarios exercise useful involving different everyday situations in which simple comments and actions can be interpreted differently.” ◆ “Question and answer session informative and clarified points.” ◆ “Found open discussion most useful part of session.” ◆ “Pointed out information I did not know about.” ◆ “Very well delivered, questions answered well. Examples and notes useful.” ◆ “Awareness of legislation most useful part of session.” ◆ “Delivery inclusive and delivered at right level.” <p><u>Negative feedback from attendees:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “Training condensed into 2.5 hours, a lot to take in.” ◆ “Was very long.” ◆ “Grey areas regarding equality and diversity legislation in our unique working environment.”

Training	No's attended	Evaluation and Conclusions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “A lot of paperwork was provided. Consideration should be given to a Reference File kept on station.” ◆ “Found discussion on language and diversity least useful.” ◆ “Need to control attendees in the room who talk too much.” ◆ Would have liked visual aids.” ◆ “Found quiz least useful.” <p><u>Other comments and suggestions from staff for future training delivery</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “More detailed sessions on individual equality and fairness policies and line management responsibilities.” ◆ “Introduce discussion training on station, at watch level on an annual basis.” ◆ “Introduce further examples of behaviours and language.” ◆ “Introduce fresh guidance on maintaining shared working environments.” ◆ “Development of powerpoint/training notes for on-station training by station management.” ◆ “Further input on issues around female firefighters and behaviour and language in stations.”

Training	No's attended	Evaluation and Conclusions
<p>Watch Commanders Conference all day event. Short presentation for Watch and Crew Commanders on equality in the workplace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27/01/08 	<p>57</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “The training should be done about twice a year.” ◆ “Would like more coverage on equality issues in relation to people with dependants.” ◆ “Make training materials available for download and print.” ◆ “Would have liked longer debate.” ◆ “In relation to discrimination would like training provision on secure methods of recording interviews, reports of incidents etc.” ◆ “Would like further courses with opportunity to gain a qualification in this area.” ◆ “Would like a review to be scheduled to highlight any changes in the area – time span 18 months to 2 years.” <p><u>Comments from attendees</u> Evaluations not obtained on this occasion.</p>

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.

(Enter text below)

- The Corporate Communications Manager continues to ensure that press releases, media statements and senior officer public speeches reflect NIFRS commitment to equality and diversity and the statutory duties. Internally, progress on equality is reported as an agenda item of the NIFRS Service Support Committee of the Board.
- Communication of progress on screening activities etc mainly takes place via the internal 'public folders' shared email facility for NIFRS staff. This system can house downloadable documents, questionnaires, draft policies etc. Staff are directed to check this folder either by email or through the monthly Core and Team Brief mechanism.
- Wide public consultation is considered within the corporate Consultation Group and this includes the equality statutory duties.
- Information from our IT Department on the number of 'hits' experienced by our website indicates that the sections on 'Careers' and 'Equality' are popular.
- In relation to impact/success of our communication activities, communication with staff was expected to improve due to the monthly Core and Team Brief system introduced in 2007. Review of the system took place towards the end of the reporting period and early indications are that some staff are still not benefiting from the Team Brief system to the same degree as others. Actions arising from these findings will be considered in the coming year.

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.

(Enter text below)

- We input our monitoring data on a 'Peodesy' equality monitoring database. This system has been updated to allow for monitoring across the Section 75 equality categories and to store baseline data on applicant flow and workforce profiles.
- Information in respect of equality research continues to be shared amongst members of the DHSSPS Equality Steering Group. We have also established a liaison group between Police Service of Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service and the Coastguard Agency. This group has been founded to primarily consider Disability Action Plans and to work collectively where possible. It has also been agreed that the group will consider Section 75 issues.
- Operations Department continue to monitor risk profile data in line with the Standards of Emergency Response for Northern Ireland.
- The results from our participation in the national Gender Diversity Benchmarking exercise facilitated by Opportunity Now became available during the reporting period, in May 2007. We achieved a very encouraging Silver Status result and it was the first time we had been benchmarked against comparable organisations across the UK, over and above other Fire & Rescue Services. The findings have contributed to our approach to gender diversity during the reporting period and for the year ahead.
- Please outline any use of the Commission's Section 75 Monitoring Guide.

(Enter text below)

- The Equality Manager and Diversity Officer met with ECNI Officers to discuss a planned organisation-wide S75 monitoring exercise for NIFRS. The Monitoring Guidance is being referred to as part of this activity.

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.

(Enter text below)

- We have the capacity to deal with requests for information in alternative formats and quick telephone access to translation services.
- The NIFRS website is accessible to people with visual disabilities and contains relevant information on the statutory duties.
- All capitals works programmes are cognisant of DDA compliance and this is a key element in our proposals for station relocation.
- We enhanced our multi-lingual fire safety information by developing resources for operational personnel at incidents where members of the public do not speak or have a limited knowledge of English.
- Outdoor adshel posters in main languages were developed to assist in targeting fire safety messages for migrant workers and foreign nationals. Adshels are fixed to station external walls at Lisburn, Larne, Ballymena, Bangor, Newry, Lurgan, Portadown, Whitla, Springfield, Knock, Northland, Foyleside, Omagh, Cookstown and Enniskillen, at our Fire & Rescue Service Training Centre and at Bow Street Mall (Lisburn).
- The Home Fire Safety Check advertising postcard and support material has also been produced in English, Irish, Polish, Portuguese and Ulster Scots. Part of our Home Fire Safety Check Scheme is to supply smoke alarms suitable for the hearing impaired, based on an assessment by health Trust sensory teams.
- During the reporting year we introduced a service wide interpreter service to facilitate our staff at operational or community safety events and provide a communications channel between clients and our representatives.
- Community safety days and events are facilitated by Community Safety staff, delivering material to migrant workers and foreign nationals in Portadown, Dungannon and Belfast.
- During the year we received only one request for information in an alternative format (from a member of staff on behalf of a family member). The request was subsequently withdrawn by the individual.

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.

(Enter text below)

- No complaints 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.

(Enter text below)

- We conducted targeted consultation in respect of our Disability Action Plan.
- An NIFRS Disability Outreach advertisement was placed to run throughout the 2008 financial year in 'Able' Magazine, the largest circulation disability publication in the UK.
- Operations Research Unit conducted two consultation exercises on high level strategies during the reporting year. The Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan for 2008-2009 was subject to a 12 week consultation exercise during 1 November 2007 – 31 January 2008 and was widely advertised both internally and externally, targeting all our major stakeholders and staff. The consultation documents contained questions directly relating to Section 75 and also Rural Proofing issues. The Draft Road Safety Strategy was also subject to a 12 week consultation period during 1 January 2008 and 24 March 2008.
- In addition to direct contact with groups, we make use of the Employers Forum on Disability and Opportunity Now to access to networks and avail of good practice and advice.
- Engagement is evident through our Community Development outreach and at our 4 Area Commands, through the following mechanisms;
 - Youth and community outreach and initiatives – we have a number of Youth Engagement Schemes designed to engage with young people from the ages of 12-20 in a formal and informal environment.
 - Westland Fire Station in Belfast has facilities for Youth Conferencing on the premises and these have been used

throughout the reporting year for Bee Safe initiatives for North and West Belfast districts.

- The 'Safety Team' programme for Primary 5 school children designed to teach them the dangers of fire and how to make the home safer has been issued to all P5 pupils across Northern Ireland. School visits continue to be programmed for the 2008-2009 period.
- 'Firestorm' is the programme for young people in secondary or grammar schools.
- A total of 25 'LIFE' Schemes were held during the period involving a total of 250 young people. LIFE (Local Intervention Fire Education) is targeted at young people (male and female) selected on a cross-community basis through referral agencies from across Belfast. Eastern Area Command also participates in a number of 'Bee Safe' Schemes which are also aimed at getting a safety message across all communities.
- Expansion of the Fire Cadet Scheme in Larne during the reporting year and potentially the west of the Province in the coming year.
- Community Development Officers have an extensive network of contact with community representatives eg youth workers, community group leaders, local Councillors and MLAs. These contacts are cross-community and across all political parties.
- We have, through a 3-staged strategy, engaged with the community to stop attacks on the emergency services. Stage 1 'We're the Targets' was designed to make the matter an issue of public outrage and to emphasise that these attacks, while impacting on our staff, primarily affected the community through, at best, a delayed or, at worst, the non-attendance of NIFRS after an attack. Stages 2 and 3 are targeted at those most likely to become involved, the vulnerable in the community and those who have already attacked us. These initiatives and engagement programmes explain the consequences of these attacks, the likely outcome in terms of loss of life and highlight the possibility of a jail sentence for those involved, while

offering real alternatives and positive outcomes through engagement with us at a local community level.

- We are represented on Community Development partnerships across Northern Ireland. Most of these are run by or include other statutory bodies eg the Community Safety Partnership of Belfast City Council. Partnerships are also being developed in response to requests from local community groups. Examples include representation on Community Safety Partnerships in Strabane, Limavady and Londonderry.
- Western Area Command is also involved in the Interface Forum, Bonfire Liaison Group, Emergency Planning Group for City of Derry airport. The Crescent Link station is used for meetings by Knightsbridge Residence Association, the North West Mountain Rescue Team and the Home Accident Prevention Group.
- All 6 Wholetime Stations in Eastern Area Command hold an annual Open Day for members of the public to access the station, meet with staff and learn more about fire safety.
- The Home Fire Safety Check programme continues across Northern Ireland, open to all house-holders and also in designated areas defined under our Standards of Fire Cover risk assessment process.
- Operations Department conducted an assessment of risk from Special Service Incidents, involving a detailed examination of the risk posed by Road Traffic Collisions and other special service incidents, and the potential risk to life from such incidents. This informed the Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland.
- The review of appliances on 12 stations a review of emergency cover in Belfast will impact positively on the community, by improving and streamlining the response to calls for emergency assistance. Stakeholder consultation took place on this aspect as part of the consultation exercise on the Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan for 2008-2009. A positive improvement will be achieved by ensuring we consistently have the right intervention resources in terms of Firefighters, appliances and

- stations, in the right place and at the right time. This will result in a reduction in injuries and deaths from fires and other incidents. This process is informed by sound risk assessment methodology to deliver an optimum service for the whole community.
- Community Development Officers worked closely during the year with the Deaf Association of Northern Ireland to produce fire safety literature in formats accessible to deaf persons. DVDs and Daisy Wheel were produced.
 - Community safety messages were conveyed in TV advertising with subtitles and signing and aired in proportion to the number of deaf people in the community. Audio and Braille material continues to be maintained for the visually impaired.
 - We continued to make large print leaflets available for the visually impaired and as part of service delivery to the elderly.
 - A significant development in our active engagement with the community is the completion of Community Development's Community Fire Appliance. This adaptable vehicle is fully accessible by people with mobility difficulties and those who use wheelchairs.
 - During the year we reviewed Memoranda of Understanding with various government bodies and agencies, all with a view to maintaining effective service delivery to the public in the context of other agencies and government body agency requirements
 - A new Fire Station in Dunmurry became operational on 1 February 2008. A fire crew and appliance from Cadogan Fire Station (Lisburn Road, Belfast) is now based at Dunmurry Fire Station everyday between 1100 to 2300 hours. Outside these hours the area will continue to be served by Fire Stations in Belfast and Lisburn as normal. This station enhances community fire safety work and also emergency cover in the greater Dunmurry area, including Poleglass, Twinbrook, Lagmore and Seymour Hill.

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.

(Enter text below)

- Our Integrated Risk Management Plan and our Community Development Strategy both contain, amongst their core aims, the objective of reducing the number of injuries or deaths due to fires and emergency incidents. The Integrated Risk Management Plan is about providing an effective fire and rescue service across Northern Ireland and is determined by risk analysis, amongst other factors. The outcomes of the IRMP can have positive impacts on certain sections of the community. The Community Development work is concerned with educating the community and changing behaviours and is also driven by analysis and assessment. The Good Relations Duty has been taken forward through these activities.
 - During the reporting year our youth engagement initiatives continued to yield notable results. The LIFE Scheme has developed ambassadors for the Fire & Rescue Service in the young people themselves. Each young person going back to his or her own community helps us with our fire safety message.
 - As stated in last year's Report, statistical and anecdotal evidence has shown that 90% of deliberate fires are started by children and young people. It has been proven from studies of Firesetters Schemes run in other Fire & Rescue Services that early intervention and education of children and young people who are developing a fascination with fire can greatly reduce the chance of firesetting reoccurring.
 - We encourage our Irish language speaking staff to participate in school safety talks and media articles.
 - Please outline any use of the Commission's Good Relations Guide.
- (Enter text below)**
- Not applicable

Section 11: Additional Comments

- Please provide any additional information/comments

(Enter text below)

- Implementation of Section 75 continues to be challenging in respect of staff and external stakeholder engagement on consultation. This is particularly in relation to those policies pertaining solely to our staff or to finer aspects of operational service delivery. However, mainstreaming equality by other corporate functions can be demonstrated by our Operations Directorate who take responsibility for consultation on the Integrated Risk Management Plan and associated actions. This Directorate works in conjunction with Equality Unit on the Section 75 aspects of this consultation activity. Other opportunities to mainstream equality, as part of service delivery, are being taken forward by other Directorates and at Area Command level, an example being Community Development Directorate's engagement with RNIB and RNID in respect of fire safety awareness for the visually and hearing impaired.
- The appointment of an additional professional resource to the Equality Unit will be a positive influence in delivering our Disability Action Plan and other initiatives.
- We also look forward to revising our formal protocols and statements regarding equality of opportunity and fairness in the workplace, in order to promote NIFRS as an employer of choice, to maintain continued compliance with our statutory obligations and to ensure the best service delivery for all in our community.

Annual Report July 2007/ March 2008
'Disability Duties' Questions

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

9

Fully
Achieved

2

Partially
Achieved

Not
Achieved

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

- Identified responsibility for management of disability action plan
- Joined Employers Forum on Disability
- Developed 'disability equality policy' and 'recruitment and retention of disabled employees policy' for all staff
- Maintained accessibility of website to AA level
- Placement of positive attitude advertisements and articles in 'Able' magazine
- Joint working group established by Northern Ireland Ambulance Service comprising Police Service of Northern Ireland, Maritime & Coastguard Agency and Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with disability action plan activities as prime focus.
- Supported Disability Exhibition in June 2008 facilitated by Disability Action.
- Disability Action Plan Summary leaflet issued to all staff
- Creation of a monitoring system of reasonable adjustments made for employees with disabilities

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership working with 'Stepping Stones' further developed through provision of employment placements at Fire & Rescue Service HQ for adults with learning disabilities. 	Two adults on placement during reporting period.	One trainee developed office skills and enhanced IT experience. This has provided the foundation for this individual to move to a placement with a large retailer, with a view to the individual gaining further office experience and also exposure in a customer facing role.

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 forums.

2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome/Impact
1	Targeted Disability Awareness Training	Provided to all HQ personnel working alongside Stepping Stones Trainees	Equipped staff to supervise, understand and engage with co-workers with learning disabilities. The training contributed to efforts to sustain a professional and supportive environment for all involved.
2	Disability Awareness Training as part of Equality & Diversity Awareness Training and Dignity at Work Training	Over 250 staff trained in aspects of disability awareness and retention issues for the Fire & Rescue Service	<p>Clearer understanding amongst uniformed personnel of the organisation's position on reasonable adjustment and continued employment, in the event of becoming disabled.</p> <p>This is supported at national UK Fire & Rescue service level with Firefighters with disabilities profiled in the media, Fire Service publications and events.</p>

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	Disability Action Plan Summary	Issued to all staff with a covering letter from Chief Fire Officer	A small number of staff have now referred to the Disability Action Plan when making enquiries regarding personal circumstances
2	Corporate Identity Guidelines (Branding Policy)	Refers to Wendy Gregory position on visual accessibility.	Website under appraisal for accessibility. Media Handbook in draft. Due for consultation later in 2008.

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

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome/Impact
1	Partnership working with agencies/groups	Joint working group established with NIAS, PSNI and Coastguard	Meetings scheduled for 2008/09 to identify opportunities for joint activities/share best practice and access to local forums

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	Not applicable		

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	Community Development Strategy includes engagement with people with disabilities as part of its targeted home safety and youth initiatives	During the reporting year work was ongoing with RNID and RNIB in the first instance	Signed 'Smoke Kills' advert on UTV – feedback from Deaf Community very positive	More work is planned including workshops with the Deaf Community and other representative groups
2	Government 'Workable' Scheme being implemented for adult trainee with learning disability	Stepping Stones now working in liaison with NØW, Belfast who act as advisers to employers on implementation of the Scheme	Meeting to be arranged between NIFRS and NØW later in 2008	Establishing protocols for appropriate Scheme implementation eg impact on individuals benefits, working hours and structure

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.

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

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	All actions on the Disability Action Plan will be progressed, insofar as is possible, throughout the Plan timescale.	

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
Not applicable

(b) Quantitative

- Feedback forms from training indicate an increased awareness amongst staff.
- Monitoring of reasonable adjustment considerations and actions taken now in place.
- Equality & Diversity Forum, chaired by a NIFRS Board Member and comprising Senior Officers and Representative Bodies officials, will consider Disability Action Plan progress and outcomes on a quarterly basis.

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: [No](#)

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?

[We do not intend to revise our Plan at this stage. We propose to work collaboratively with other partnerships and groups in order to fulfil the commitments already stated and implement a best practice approach where possible.](#)