

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2022-2023

PUBLIC AUTHORITY STATUTORY EQUALITY AND GOOD RELATIONS DUTIES

**Section 75 & Schedule 9 of the Northern
Ireland Act 1998**



*Safer
Together*

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report

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Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:

www.nifrs.org

Signature:



**This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the
Equality Commission.**

**It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good
relations duties, and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and
Disability Action Plans.**

This report reflects progress made between April 2022 and March 2023

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PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme

Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice

- 1** In 2022-2023, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.

Introduction

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) provides core fire and rescue functions across Northern Ireland (NI). As well as responding to fires, we respond to road traffic collisions and to specialist incidents which include flooding, water rescue, search and rescue and incidents involving chemical, biological or radioactive substances.

Our statutory functions require us to contribute to making the community safer. Our specific focus is those who are deemed ‘people at risk’, and we have community prevention and protection initiatives to protect these groups and educate on fire safety awareness. We strive to embed equality into our service delivery methodologies and initiatives.

In the reporting period 2022-2023 NIFRS, we have had to adapt how we allocate our resources to meet the needs of our operating environment in a very constrained financial climate. However, we continued to provide both emergency response and preventative interventions. We make our community safer by aiming to prevent incidents occurring through educating, delivering safety advice and providing targeted interventions to those most at risk. This is achieved by understanding the needs of our community and working in collaboration with a range of partners.

Examples of key policy/service delivery developments made during the reporting period are outlined below. These are outlined at (i) and (ii) below:

- (i) Examples of key NIFRS policy developments to better promote equality of opportunity during 2022-2023:**

Menopause Policy

In October 2022 the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team worked collaboratively with the Health and Wellbeing team to launch the Menopause Policy which was published in February 2023. The purpose of this policy is to provide an overview of the menopause, outlining the symptoms of the menopause and focus on the support mechanisms and occupational adjustments that NIFRS can put in place to care for our employees going through the menopause. The Menopause policy was developed, documented, approved, published, controlled and will be reviewed again in 1 year. The policy was supported by launching menopause champions and line manager awareness training. This involved seeking volunteers for Menopause Champions followed by adequate training before these Champions could be deemed sufficiently trained to help others in NIFRS. A Menopause champion booklet was supplied to support those in the role and two support meetings per year for the group to enable us to come together and offer support to one another, discuss any difficulties we have faced in the role and to enable us to make suggestions for improvements where required. The line manager awareness training was well attended. It was screened and had a positive impact for women. NIFRS consulted with the representative bodies, internal employees and the Women's Rep for the Fire Brigades Union.

Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulations 2018 (website and mobile)

During this reporting period significant work was undertaken by the Corporate Communications Team addressing accessibility issues on NIFRS corporate website to ensure it was compliant with The Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulations. The Government Digital Service aligned with the Cabinet Office UK monitors and audits public service organisational compliance with the legislation. An audit was undertaken by the Government Digital Service with the outcome expected in early 2023/24. Due to this work being undertaken to meet Accessibility Guidelines, early indications would suggest that there will be a positive outcome in this Audit as the NIFRS website/mobile app now has a more accessible format making it more understandable and robust for people that have a disability such as hearing impairments, visual impairments and more foreign languages available for interpretation.

False Alarm Policy

The purpose of this policy is to detail NIFRS' protocols for the effective management of Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs). The policy details expectations for NIFRS staff, fire alarm monitoring organisations, fire alarm installers, fire alarm maintainers and the end users of fire alarm systems. This allows resources to be available for genuine emergencies and community safety

initiatives. In some circumstances, Automatic fire detection systems are activated and upon investigation by the fire service it is found that a fire has not occurred. These false alarms have a serious impact to NIFRS, diverting firefighters from other genuine emergencies and potentially life-saving activity. This policy has been drafted during this reporting period but not yet implemented as it is currently being screened, but is expected to be implemented in the 2023-24 reporting period.

(ii) Examples of key NIFRS Initiatives developments to better promote equality of opportunity during 2022-2023:

‘People at Risk’ Prevention / Fire Safety Initiatives:

As part of our statutory duty to keep people safe from the dangers of fire NIFRS aims to reduce fatalities due to accidental dwelling fires through targeted fire safety prevention activities. These prevention activities are aimed at people deemed to be at higher risk from accidental house fire e.g. older persons, persons with poor standards of living and those with mobility and/or health issues which would impact on their ability to respond to a fire. The NIFRS People at Risk Strategy 2016-2021 is still undergoing a review and although most of the elements of this strategy will remain it will be combined with the Strategically Targeted Areas of Risk (STAR) initiatives. This was launched in the last reporting period and continues to be a focus for NIFRS in delivering fire safety advice in the Super Output areas of Northern Ireland that are monitored by statistics gathered and means identifying those people most at risk are accurately recorded.

Outcomes and improvements achieved for STARS in 2022/23:

During 2022-23 Firefighters carried out 5,033 free home fire safety checks, an increase of 29% on the 3,894 checks undertaken in 2021-22. Through our defined People At Risk groups we completed 366 targeted activities (2021-22: 431) reaching an audience of 25,520 (2021-22: 4,556). These activities included leaflet drops, talks, events and exhibitions.

443 other activities in relation to wider fire safety messaging were completed (2021-22: 1,086), this included events/ exhibitions, alongside our partners, and leaflet drops reaching an audience of 34,738 (2021-22: 9,107).

Targeted Initiatives: During 2022-23, Strategically Targeted Areas of Risk (STAR) Initiative, Crews contacted 2,073 homes identified in this initiative as being more at risk from fire in the home. 887 occupiers received specific home fire safety advice, and a further 1,186 homes received Home Fire Safety leaflets and literature.

Road Safety

Working to drive down road deaths we completed 50 events in partnership with other agencies, with a total target audience of 7,617 people reached. NIFRS Your Choice programme, tailored for the 16-24 year old age group, was delivered at a further 18 events, reaching 998 people.

Prevention

In order to drive down accidental house fires we actively target people who fit our "People at Risk" (PAR) definition, those aged 50 or older; anyone with an impaired mobility, and anyone referred to us by our key partners. We completed 350 targeted activities (2021-22: 431) reaching an audience of 25,520 (2021-22: 4,556). These activities included leaflet drops, talks, events and exhibitions.

We offer the PAR demographic free face to face Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs). Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, Firefighters carried out 5,033 free Home Fire Safety Checks (an increase of 29% on the 3,894 checks undertaken in 2021-22) and fitted 5,579 (an increase of 28% from a baseline of 4,348 in 2021-22) smoke alarms. 34% of HFSCs completed were as a result of a Partnership referral.

Continued Representation on Partnerships/Forums

We have continued to contribute to existing and established partnership working and develop new and meaningful/qualitative partnerships in person and virtual meetings. During this reporting period NIFRS continued its representation through attending additional groups such as Loneliness Network Meetings and Agewell Partnership Meetings. Most existing Partnership Agreements were reviewed and renewed where deemed fit which meant partnerships were reduced in number slightly as some were deemed unproductive.

Initiatives to support underrepresented groups

NIFRS organised events and programmes in the reporting period including the following:

Autism

A Station Commander (SC) in NIFRS, is a member of the Northern Trust ASD Forum with the purpose being to ensure better services for people with Autism. The SC has availed of training opportunities such as Autism Awareness training for Fire Service Personnel through Mid & East Antrim Council area. Following this training the District Commander has provided awareness training to

Ballymena Wholetime Watches with the hope to roll training out to On Call Stations, Carrickfergus, Larne, Whitehead, and Carnlough. NIFRS personnel also attended an Autism experience roadshow. Using the ASD user group – people with autism or carers who participate in meetings can assess NIFRS HFSC for sensitivity and appropriateness for autistic people.

Asylum seekers

Having identified a significant population of asylum seekers in Coleraine District through Statutory Cohesion meetings NIFRS was able to reach out to the council members and asylum groups to assist with information days which involved providing fire safety advice through an interpreter at events, arranging operational familiarisation visits to the asylum accommodation for single people and families.

Through the statutory group, opportunities were provided for Cultural sensitivity training for District personnel to aid interaction with asylum seekers and family members.

LGBT

‘Asking LGBT Inclusive Questions and having challenging conversations’ workshop took place on International day against homophobia, bi-phobia, and transphobia. This course included topics on inclusive behaviour, inclusive questions, having challenging conversations and a discussion on challenging discriminatory behaviour. Further LGBT related training will be planned going forward in 23-24 to celebrate this day and raise awareness.

Female Leadership programmes

The ATHENA programme was piloted in 21-22 and the attendees of this session are now being utilised as a women’s development group, set up to discuss future development options and opportunities for women. NIFRS aims to roll out a Women’s development portfolio (including ATHENA again) in 23-24. There was a Presentation of certificates in May 2022 for those in the group.

Following on from the ATHENA group programme, NIFRS held a follow up session for the operational females who attended the ATHENA group to discuss what types of interventions could be put in place for females in the development of a women’s portfolio for the service. Feedback for what the portfolio could look like was discussed and will be used going forward in to the reporting period 2023-24.

International Women’s day was marked by NIFRS in March 2023 by the organisation of a guest speaker via zoom giving a talk on ‘Confidence & Clarity’, Practical steps to taking control of your Life, Time, Career and Happiness.

Disability

NIFRS attended the Harkin Summit, a unique and renowned international summit on disability and employment that took place in June 2022. This high profile event, brought to Belfast by the Harkin Institute in partnership with NI's Department for Communities, brought together leaders and activists from business, statutory, voluntary and academic sectors amongst others. It showcased best practice both locally and internationally, build relationships and inspire change.

NIFRS joined an online summit together with leading experts in the field of diversity and inclusion to share experiences and provide practical advice and guidance in implementing a truly meaningful and diverse culture in the workplace.

Initiatives to support Young People

'Your Choice' Virtual Reality Road Safety Programme

NIFRS has continued to deliver sessions on the 'Your Choice' Road Safety programme for targeting young drivers using virtual reality technology in secondary schools as part of the schools initiative programme which was completed in this reporting period. This involved using virtual reality technology to place the young person into a hard hitting road safety scenario via specially designed goggles. The equipment is used to highlight to young drivers the dangers on our roads and what can happen if things go wrong. 88% of participants were aged 16-24 years old, which is the age group consistently over represented in the number of those killed or seriously injured on our roads. After taking part in the programme, 90% of participants said they would take fewer risks on the roads.

Adapted sessions were organised for Knockavoe School in Strabane for special education needs and a joint primary school initiative in conjunction with PSNI to raise awareness of deaf people. Deaf awareness initiative in Omagh Primary School.

The Cadet Scheme

The Fire Cadet Scheme recommenced in this reporting period having been halted during COVID. The Scheme is a youth organisation run by volunteers, and is part of the UK wide Fire Cadets. Young people can apply to join from age 14, and stay in the Scheme up to 3 years. The Cadet Scheme provides an exciting and varied range of activities including basic Firefighter skills, team building and first aid training. Our Fire Cadets work towards the National Cadet Award, and actively engage with their communities, representing NIFRS

spreading key Fire Safety messages and NIFRS values. NIFRS currently has 4 Cadet Branches in Belfast, Bangor, Lisburn and Newry. The delivery of the Fire Cadet Scheme is primarily run by 42 volunteers across the 4 sites, with support from their District officers and the Prevention Team in HQ. We take in 14 young people at each Branch with 4 places being reserved for disabled/disadvantaged socio economic groups. In this reporting period 14 places across the 4 branches were taken up by disabled/disadvantaged socio economic groups; Belfast – 4, Lisburn – 7, Newry – 3, Bangor – 1.

Safety Team

We delivered our P5 Safety Team Initiative during this reporting period which is designed to teach Primary 5 school children the dangers of fire and how to make their home safer. Our Firefighters aim to deliver this programme face to face with every P5 class across Northern Ireland and in this reporting period they made 973 visits to P5 classes throughout Northern Ireland, delivering tailored key fire safety to 32,839 pupils (2021/22: 27,651).

With the support of the Policing and Community Safety Partnership's (PCSPs), NIFRS have created a video to teach school children in Northern Ireland how to keep themselves fire safe at home which is available on the NIFRS website.

Sisters IN Project

NIFRS took part in the 'Sisters in mentoring programme' for the first time which commenced in October 2022 and was developed specifically to help sixth form girls build their confidence and broaden their career perspectives. Delivered over eight months, the programme included bespoke leadership skills training, an in-school leadership project where pupils are able to gain real-life experience, mentoring from leading females in business and society, a Job Shadow Day, awards celebration event.

NIFRS mentored 6 girls from 6 different schools. With the success of this mentoring programme NIFRS will take part again in October 2023.

Schools Summit

NIFRS attended the School Summit event at the Eikon Centre in October 2022 which was organised to promote careers to secondary school communities. A wide range of industries and universities attended this event from all over Northern Ireland to inspire young people with providing them with a chance to explore the wide range of opportunities available with local employers. NIFRS attended as an opportunity to outreach to female and ethnic minority students for future recruitment opportunities.

Careers Fairs

NIFRS recommenced taking part at career fairs during this reporting period which had previously been restricted due to COVID. NIFRS attended career fairs at a number of schools and community events with different religious backgrounds throughout this period to outreach and connect with females as an underrepresented group in NIFRS. The aim was to promote and create awareness of careers for females in NIFRS in operational and support roles. In addition, an HR female representative took part in mock interviews at St. Colms High School.

Other Youth Engagement

During 2022/23 NIFRS were able to work collaboratively with our partners in delivering several Youth engagement programmes, including the Youth Volunteer Academy, Bee Safe and the Prince's Trust 'Get Started' programme. A number of groups have visited the station during the year once COVID restrictions were lifted including Scouts and Red Cross cadets.

Newry District attended numerous workshops aimed at supporting youths in the area including Firework Safety and fire safety workshops. The district also attended a session of the Newry Youth Volunteer Academy in November 2022; to highlight the role of Firefighters within the community. The 12 week program, run by Newry City Neighbourhood Policing Team and the Education Authority, supports youths achieve an OCN Public Services qualification.

- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2022-2023(*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

NIFRS has progressed with the review of the Equality Scheme and is in the final stages of the updated version for of the Equality Scheme and conjoining documents which will be completed later this year.

In addition to outcomes and achievements referenced in last year's report and also those discussed at Section 1, Point 1 above, some further examples of outcomes under the Equality Scheme action plans are detailed below:

Action Plan Theme 1 – Measures to Improve Access to Services, Communication and Information:-

- The new NIFRS.org website launched in April 2021, equipped with "Reachdeck" toolbar. In 2022/23 this tool has been updated further with two new languages, allowing for better accessibility for non-native speakers.

- The 'Read & Write' assistive technology was fully implemented in 2022/23. This has been installed on desktops in all stations and those employee laptops that requested it. The Read & Write technology supports those employees with neurodiversity. This has proved highly successful in being a useful aid and tool for those employees with learning difficulties such as dyslexia. It has also been made available to share at home with families.
- The e-learning platform LMS (Learning Management System), has been further progressed with more e-learning courses developed and easily accessible on this platform e.g. Equality Screening training. In addition a number of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion showcase courses have been added: Allyship in practice, Unconscious bias in practice and Dignity & Respect – Core Team. There are several more e-learning training courses currently in progression to go live in 2023/24 on employee induction/onboarding, Section 75, Rural Needs.
- We continued to participate on the Department of Health Equality & Human Rights Steering Group, where equality leads are networked across HSC Trusts in sharing good practice on Section 75 implementation.
- Prevention and Protection Station Commanders across all of our Area Commands continued to attend in person and virtually various working group meetings including Bonfire Liaison/ Community Tension Committees, Policing and Community Safety Partnership, Multi Agency Support Hubs (MASH), Community Support Hubs, Agewell Partnership Meetings, Health & Wellbeing Action Groups, Safety Advisory Groups, Loneliness Network Meetings, Northern Emergency Preparedness Group & Emergency Planning Meetings, Sensory Support Teams.
- Our social media channels eg twitter and facebook, NIFRS website were used prominently throughout the year to target safety messaging and communication to the public. NIFRS equality team promoted and shared our commitment to Equality, Diversity and inclusion by tweeting some of the events NIFRS attended through the reporting period including: The Harkin Summit in June 2022, celebrating Pride in July 2022, Careers event at St Columbanus College in October 2022, raising awareness and supporting World Menopause Day in October 2022, attending the Schools Summit October 2022, attending ECNI Make Equality a Priority- law reform conference in November 2022, Women in Fire service online event in January 2023, hosting the Sisters In job shadowing day in March 2023, Careers day at Hazelwood school in March 2023, Neurodiversity week in March 2023.

- Our Corporate Communications Team also carried out the following social media activities to promote equality:
 - Promoting the various roles held by female employees within the organisation by social media profiling including:
 - Female Cadets for Cadet recruitment, April 2022
 - Fire Cadet youth engagement activities promoted throughout the year including Duke of Edinburgh activities and display events.
 - Female Firefighters when advertising On-Call Firefighter positions, February 2023- media and social media
 - Profiling a Female firefighter in the Belfast Telegraph International Firefighter's Day
 - Profiling a range of women within the organisation for International Womens' Day March 2023
 - Profiling Female Firefighters in photocall for £2.3m investment in recruitment story, September 2022
 - Profiling Female Firefighters as part of NIFRS Firefighter Challenge Profiling Female NIFRS athletes at World Police & Fire Games, July 2022
 - Encouraging people who are deaf or hard of hearing to avail of Home Fire Safety Checks as part of NFCC Deaf Awareness Week, May 2022
 - Profiling the female Cadet Leader's Charity Work, June 2022
 - Fall Prevention Week which links with 'People at Risk' Strategy as targeted at over 50s, September 2022
 - Engaging in Student Fire Safety Week- explaining to young people (age 18-21) who may be living away from home for the first time about the dangers of fire, September 2022
 - UN International Day of Older Persons- links with PAR Strategy, September 2022
 - Profiling female RCC Colleagues for International Control Room Week, showing other women that RCC is a good career for women, October 2022
 - Raising awareness on World Menopause Day, October 2022
 - Winter safety campaign, December 2022, targeted at 'people at risk'
 - Profiling Female Firefighters graduating as Wholetime Firefighters in May 2022 and February 2023.
 - Schools youth engagement work promoted throughout the year e.g. P5 safety talks- social media

Action Plan Theme 2 – Measures for Awareness raising, training and capacity

In this reporting period the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team have designed training for all new recruits both operational and support staff, refresher training, inclusivity training for instructors and additional bespoke training to raise awareness of employees responsibility towards S75 and equality of opportunity.

NIFRS EDI team designed bespoke refresher equality training to be rolled out across the estate. Sixteen Officers (Watch Commander to Group Commander level) were coached and provided the skills and resources to deliver the training program across all four area commands. Training was delivered to 379 operational staff between August 2022 and January 2023.

In addition new employees received Equality, Diversity & Inclusion training including:

- Delivering an Inclusive Training Environment
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion training for first line managers
- Equality, Diversity & inclusion induction & refresher training
- How to undertake S75 Equality Screening of policy

During the reporting period the EDI team commenced work to deliver an E-Learning package to facilitate an improved awareness among lead policy officers of the requirement to undertaking Equality Screening with due regard for equality of opportunity and regard for good relations. The E-learning package will be launched in 2023/2024. Training was also scheduled in March 2023 for the Senior Leadership Team, supported by ECNI, and training is planned to be delivered to the Board in 2023/24. Although there were a limited number of policy screened in the 2022/23 reporting period, this has been rectified for period 2023/24.

Action Plan Theme 4 – Measures to Promote Participation and Inclusion

- A NIFRS female Station Commander provided a short "Inspiring Women" video which was used during a course for Training for women network (TWN) PASS (promote, advance & support for success) programme aimed at young women aged 16-24.
- NIFRS participated in the Sisters-In project, as previously referred to within the report. In addition to female leaders mentoring young female students from schools across Northern Ireland, a NIFRS Station Commander delivered a Leadership Masterclass with a participating

school. NIFRS are enrolled to participate in this program again in 2023/24.

- NIFRS collaborated with Girls Brigade NI to develop development programs to be delivered across 110 GB companies in NI. Three programs were created including Home Safety and Women in the Fire and Rescue Services.
- NIFRS successfully maintained its membership of Women in the Fire Service UK, furthering our commitment to supporting women in the workplace.
- NIFRS continues to maintain its membership of Women in Business (WIB) and during the reporting period three middle managers were participating in the mentoring scheme.
- Safety Team talks delivered in Irish language to two Irish Language schools. Home Fire Safety leaflets produced in Ukrainian for refugees.
- Station visits carried out for special educational schools, one for Killronan School Magherafelt and one Planned for Sperrinview Dungannon.
- Safety talks given to numerous at risk groups throughout the District including Cookstown V Arthrius.
- Deaf awareness initiative in Omagh Primary School.
- NIFRS attended the Harkin Summit in June 2022, joining leaders and activists across Business, Government, Philanthropy, the Third and Voluntary Sector, and Academia to highlight and address disability employment issues, gaining awareness of best practice and building relationships.
- NIFRS participated in the PRIDE Event in July 2022 for the first time. Our representation was supported by NIFRS employees volunteering their attendance along with a Fire appliance and uniformed operational staff. By attending and marking Pride demonstrates that NIFRS are an employer of choice and an ally for the LGBTQ+ community and making everybody feel comfortable and safe being themselves wherever they are. Celebrating Pride in Belfast was a great way for NIFRS to promote awareness as well as increasing understanding of the issues faced by those in the LGBTQ+ community.

Action Plan Section 2 Employment Related Issues

- We continued to embed disability equality through our Reasonable Adjustment Panel. During the period the Reasonable Adjustment Panel reviewed reasonable adjustments for 46 employees. This includes provision of specialist office equipment for physical and neurodiverse requirements as well as reviewing working hours and arrangements.
- Outreach - we continued to promote firefighting as a viable career option for under-represented groups in our Service, specifically women and Ethnic Minorities. We do this through training our employees, releasing positive press articles and media statements, ensuring the profile of our existing women Firefighters is raised on our website, on social media and in wider reporting.
- Our outreach to schools and colleges resumed in this reporting period having been halted in previous reporting periods due to previous COVID restrictions and NIFRS attended a number of careers events as well as mock interviews.
- As part of our Careers Convention outreach NIFRS attended Schools Summit in October 2022 which was attended by over 3000 pupils from 35 schools across NI as part of our outreach as an equal opportunities employer.
- NIFRS continues to appoint applicants from the Wholetime Firefighter reserve list, from the 2020 recruitment campaign. 78 Trainee Firefighters were appointed within the reporting period, of which 15% were women.
- Further progress was made in supporting employees and job applicants with dyslexia by engaging the services of a Chartered Educational Psychologist. 8 Diagnostic Assessments were carried out throughout the year and numerous adjustments were made both in the workplace and during various recruitment processes.
- A large Recruitment & Selection campaign for On Call Firefighters across 46 stations was commenced in the reporting period. This campaign attracted 1118 candidates. Of the 1118 candidates the community background and gender background of the applicants is detailed below:

Total On Call Applicants

Community Background	Protestant	Catholic	Other
	41%	36.5%	22.5%

Gender	Male 86.6%	Female 13.4%
Ethnicity	White 97%	Other Ethnic Groups 3%

The recruitment process for on-call firefighters is on-going and the first appointees will be made in September 2023. Less than 3% of applicants from this campaign described themselves as disabled; however over 9% declared Specific Learning Disabilities, dyslexia, stammer, autism, etc, and were given consideration towards reasonable adjustments, These range from provision of interview questions in written format to extra time and the provision of reader / scribe for literacy and numeracy assessments.

- 3** Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2022-2023 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

☒ Yes ☐ No (go to Q.4) ☐ Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

Throughout the reporting period engagement and consultation took place on policies as part of the screening process. Examples of policies screened are:

Screened out:

- Menopause Policy

Screened out with mitigation:

- Not Applicable

Screened in for EQIA:

- Not Applicable

It has been recognised that NIFRS could significantly improve their endeavours with regards to equality screening and consideration towards conducting Equality Impact Assessments. This has been addressed within the reporting period through awareness training and a review of process. The outcome of these efforts have resulted in increased engagement, consultation and screening exercises within the following reporting period.

- 3a** With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

Menopause Policy – With the introduction of this policy women in particular have been positively impacted. Women feel more comfortable to come forward and request help either by seeking support and advice from Occupational Health, or by having the facility to order more thermally comfortable uniforms to wear on a day to day basis.

- 3b** What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? *(tick all that apply)*

- ☒ As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy *(please give details):*
- ☐ As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise *(please give details):*
- ☐ As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details):*
- ☐ As a result of changes to access to information and services *(please specify and give details):*
- ☐ Other *(please specify and give details):*

Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures

Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

- 4** Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2022-2023 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- ☒ Yes, organisation wide
- ☐ Yes, some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- ☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Equality is included in all job descriptions across the organisation and Section 75 is implicit in this. The 'rolemaps' of operational employees, Firefighter up to Chief Fire & Rescue Officer, are nationally defined and underpinned by accredited National Occupational Standards. Whilst these job descriptions do not specifically reference Section 75, due to their GB origin, equality and diversity is referenced within each rolemap for the different levels of operational post.

All Support employee roles i.e. specialist and administrative roles, contain the criteria 'Be responsible for promoting, upholding and implementing NIFRS policies, plans and procedures and those relating to legal requirements such as equality, health and safety, Data Protection and Freedom of Information, etc.'

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2022-2023 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- ☐ Yes, organisation wide
- ☒ Yes, some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- ☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Implementation of the Statutory Duties is included in the objectives for the HR Directorate and specifically for members of the HR Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team. Station performance audits also include review of equality and diversity in relation to employee training and also the number of new dignity at work/ discrimination complaints received at a local level.

6 In the 2022-2023 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? (*tick all that apply*)

- ☐ Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- ☐ Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- ☒ Yes, in some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's ongoing

corporate plan

☐ No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2022-2023 report

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Section 75 activities are included in the annual business plan for Human Resources, under the objectives for the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team. The requirement to screen is implicit for policy activity outlined in other Directorates functional business plans.

Equality action plans/measures

7 Within the 2022-2023 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:	<input type="text" value="4"/>	Actions ongoing:	<input type="text" value="3"/>	Actions to commence:	<input type="text" value="9"/>
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Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

Examples of Actions Completed

- Considerable Equality, inclusion and dignity at work training delivered throughout the reporting period including:
 - New Employee induction programmes (197 New Employees)
 - Train the Trainer workshops were delivered to Station Commanders to facilitate delivering refresher Equality, Diversity & Inclusion training to 379 operational employees across all districts.
 - Bespoke inclusivity training was designed and delivered to instructors at NIFRS Learning & Development Centre in both 2022 and 2023.
 - Equality, inclusion and dignity at work training for First line management was delivered to 57 recently appointed crew commanders.
- Reasonable adjustments made for employees and job applicants under a formal reasonable adjustment process. Adjustments have included changes to working hours/patterns, removal of certain duties, assistive equipment and PPE, software support and referral for CBT and other therapies.
- Disability Action Plan pending consultation
- Reviewed and updated Section 75 Stakeholder Consultee List and

groupings under each of the 9 categories

Examples of actions ongoing

- S75 Screening E-learning package under development – to be launched Autumn 2023
- Review of the Equality Scheme– ongoing
- Screening of Community Risk Integrated Management Plan (CRMP) 2022-2027
- Targeted Outreach to under-represented groups

Examples of actions to commence

- Future actions will be influenced by the recommendations of the independent inspection of NIFRS led by HM Chief Inspector of the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, which commenced summer 2022
- Conduct an Audit of inequalities
- Review of the Equality Action Plan
- Review & relaunch The Equality action steering groups Autumn 2023
- Launch Equality E-bulletin to improve communication of Equality agenda
- Review NIFRS publishing of Consultations, EQIA and policy screening processes
- Develop database of Section 75 quantitative and qualitative data available to NIFRS policy lead officers in support of mainstreaming. Including 2021 Census data regarding to NI population, migration data, local working population, areas of social deprivation and available Service delivery quantitative and qualitative information.
- Work with Governance to review a program of screening of all Directorates Policies, procedures and strategies.

- 8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2022-2023 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

Not applicable

- 9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2022-2023 reporting period, the following have been identified: (*tick all that apply*)

- ☒ Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality
- ☐ Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way
- ☐ Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities

☐ Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)

- 10** Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: *(tick one box only)*

☒ All the time

☐ Sometimes

☐ Never

- 11** Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2022-2023 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

The Menopause Policy was consulted on prior to being published. After consultation a key area of concern for women was the challenge to be heard by their GP to get advice on menopause issues. NIFRS decided to offer appointments with the Occupational Health professionals to progress these matters advising women of how to have the conversations required to obtain a more positive outcome.

- 12** In the 2022-2023 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: *(tick all that apply)*

☐ 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/out of the consultation

☒ Internet discussions

☐ Telephone consultations

☐ Other *(please specify)*: Video Conferencing

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

Increasingly we are conducting engagement sessions and conducting presentations virtually.

- 13** Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2022-2023 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The NIFRS Equality Scheme 2016 is accessible to the public for download from the 'Publications' section of our website www.nifrs.org/publications.

A hard copy of the Scheme is also given to all new employees and reference to Section 75 and individual status as an internal stakeholder of NIFRS is clearly communicated at all equality training, included our induction programmes.

The Scheme is currently under review and will be finalised in 2023/2024.

- 14** Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2022-2023 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable – no commitment to review

Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

We have templates in place to support Lead Officers in progressing screening. Our Pre-Screening Guidance and Preliminary Questionnaire and also our Screening Report Template is available to policy lead officers under the internal NIFRS Global Drive. Members of the HR Equality, Inclusion & Diversity Team provide advice and guidance to lead officers and establish 'Screening Teams' with those involved.

The NIFRS consultee list is routinely reviewed and when we are formally notified by consultees of changes to contact information; or in line with new contacts through partnership arrangements managed by NIFRS Community Protection and NIFRS Operations Directorate teams.

Our Corporate Communications Team promote our consultation activity through our website and social media channels.

We also consider alternative formats of documents under assessment and also any adjustments that are required for meetings at Fire Service venues (portable induction loops, ramp access, accessible meeting rooms). We also now have the option of using conference call facilities such as Zoom.

The Screening Report is progressed by the lead officer, in conjunction with HR Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Team and then updated following any consultation that takes place. We publish consultation outcomes on our website and consultees who make responses are formally responded to.

Our NIFRS website has the functionality to publish screening outcomes, however there are no screening outcomes at present;

<https://www.nifrs.org/home/about-us/publications/publication-scheme/>

- 15 Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year (*as recorded in screening reports*):

1

- 16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2022-2023:

1	Policy consultations conducted with screening assessment presented.
0	Policy consultations conducted with an equality impact assessment (EQIA) presented.
NA	Consultations for an EQIA alone.

- 17 Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:
By methods including questionnaire responses, stakeholder presentations and online and face to face meetings:

- Menopause Policy

- 18 Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? (*tick one box only*)

☐ Yes
 ☐ No concerns were raised
 ☒ No
 ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

NA

Arrangements for publishing the results of assessments (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

- 19** Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2022-2023 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

No EQIA completed during the period.

Arrangements for monitoring and publishing the results of monitoring (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

- 20** From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2022-2023 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes ☐ No, already taken place
☒ No, scheduled to take place in 2023 ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details:

Not applicable

- 21** In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Not applicable

- 22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2022-2023 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

Not applicable

- 23** Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

Not applicable

Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)

- 24** Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2022-2023, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

During the reporting period there were 141 support staff, Regional Control Centre staff, On-Call and Wholetime Trainee Firefighters who received Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) induction training. In addition 413 employees received refresher EDI training and 16 Station Commanders were trained to deliver refresher EDI training across the Organisation.

- 25** Please provide **any examples** of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

In relation to our in-house equality training, this continued to be delivered via a group-based classroom environment. As part of this training we use of an interactive quiz, that is updated regularly, using participants' mobile phones, to introduce them to Equality issues at the start of the training. This has proven to be an effective tool encouraging discussion and engagement at the outset. Case studies are used for discussion and debate to put learning into practice. During the reporting period the training was reviewed and additional inclusions were made comprising of more in-depth discussions on Sexual Harassment, in particular in relation to women and the LGBTQ community, including recent research data and recent NI Tribunal cases. The risk attached to improper use of Social Media and recent media cases were highlighted.

The EDI team also developed and launched training designed to improve inclusivity of the Learning & Development function. Instructors and senior officers were delivered training with a focus on inclusive language and practices as well as adjusting training delivery and assessments to accommodate trainees with disabilities & SpLDs. This training complemented a Team engagement and leadership program being delivered to L&D instructors by HSC leadership centre. This program focused on Values, behaviours and culture, as well as launching the Learning & Development Charter. The mission of the Charter is to "create an

inclusive and supportive learning environment with a commitment to ensuring a friendly and stimulating setting that promotes lifelong learning”.

Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)

- 26** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2022-2023, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

NIFRS continues to develop its communication channels internally and externally. Our Corporate Communications Team leads on ensuring our social media channels and website actively promotes fire safety campaigns and messages; our consultation exercises; our recruitment campaigns and engagement with the public.

Through our website, Facebook and Twitter accounts we promote factual information on our emergency response incidents and we also highlight good news stories on where we have protected and saved lives. The Equality Team continue to have their own twitter account to raise neurodiversity awareness and information on events held.

Our Community Protection function has been particularly well-served through our social media outlets and we have been able to promote and inform service users about our partnership agreements and collaborative working to support ‘People at Risk’.

NIFRS Website continues to be equipped with ‘Reachdeck’, accessibility and inclusion software, supporting neurodiverse individuals as well as visual and hearing disabilities and the ability to translate into over 100 languages. Two new languages were added this year to include Ukrainian.

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

- 27** How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2022-2023?

Insert number here:

0

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:
Not Applicable

Section 3: Looking Forward

28 Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:
2023/2024

29 Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? *(please provide details)*

The Equality Scheme continues to be under review which will fall in to the next reporting period. All of the above areas screening, consultation and training will be focused on in the new scheme.

It is anticipated that we will be focusing on the following:

- Recommendations from the HM Inspectorate Report when published
- Community Risk Integrated Management Plan

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next (2022-2023) reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

- ☒ Employment
- ☐ Goods, facilities and services
- ☒ Legislative changes
- ☒ Organisational changes/ new functions
- ☐ Nothing specific, more of the same

PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

1. Number of action measures for this reporting period that have been:

9

Fully achieved

0

Partially achieved

0

Not achieved

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

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs ⁱ	Outcomes / Impact ⁱⁱ
National ⁱⁱⁱ	N/A	N/A	N/A
Regional ^{iv}	N/A	N/A	N/A
Local ^v	Reasonable Adjustment Panel maintained to consider reasonable adjustments for employees and job applicants, including adjustments for SPLDs.	NIFRS enables employees with disabilities to continue in service and retain their knowledge and skills. Also, those employees who are no longer able to work as a result of disability are supported in retiring, where appropriate through the RAP process.	Reasonable Adjustment Policy in place. Investment in recruitment and training employees maximised by enabling employees to remain in work through implementation of reasonable adjustments. Dyslexia and Autism support has assisted employees to carry out their jobs and participate in career advancement. Supporting mental and physical wellbeing is a key focus for the NIFRS Health & Wellbeing function with initiatives for employees and Service-users implemented throughout the year.

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

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Equality and inclusion training for employees	Disability awareness and DDA requirements continued to be included in the training programme in 2022-23.	Increased awareness amongst employees of disability awareness. Line managers aware of Reasonable Adjustment Panel and referral process. One to one support given to individual line managers and employees on issues. Greater uptake from employees of being assessed for dyslexia.
2	Disability Awareness Training for employees	Disability Awareness training program delivered including: Deaf, Alzheimer's, Dyslexia and Autism Awareness workshops. Mental Health First Aid Training. Menopause Awareness Training.	Increased awareness amongst employees in regards to specific disabilities.
3	Roll Out Read & Write Gold Software & user training & dyslexia awareness training.	Completed roll out of Read & Write software on identified devices to colleagues known to have dyslexia, and provision of user training.	Increased awareness for employees and line managers of the assistance and use of this software and accessibility for employees across all stations on desktop computers and those requesting it on laptops.
4	Delivery of Menopause Champion Training	15 colleagues assigned as Menopause Champions. Launched a communication campaign to promote our Menopause Champions and supplied with purple lanyards to make them easily identifiable to all staff.	Support the aims of the Health & Wellbeing strategy to improving menopause awareness of our female employees.

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	Partnership Agreements	Working relationships maintained with Health & Social Care Trust Sensory Teams	Home Fire Safety Checks for over 50s implemented
2	Accessibility of Information	Availability of assistive technology to support employees with dyslexia.	Corporate licence maintained for assisted software to continue the roll out in 22/23.

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

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	NIFRS training on equality and inclusion	Disability awareness and disability legislation included within training module.	Greater awareness amongst employees of the DDA and DDO.
2	Membership of Employers for Disability NI	Membership affords access to EfDNI resources, guidance and networks.	Increased opportunity for engagement and access to good practice and up to date information.

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/ Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	Not applicable			

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

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	Not applicable	

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

Monitoring and review of reasonable adjustments and actions agreed by the Reasonable Adjustment Panel informs future approach in supporting disability equality issues for employees and job applicants.

(b) Quantitative

Monitoring of reasonable adjustment cases gives a good indication of where NIFRS needs to focus interventions such as provision of specialist equipment, assessments and therapies; or where further training may be needed.

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?

No change to that reported in 2021-2022 Annual Progress Report.

If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation's annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

Disability action plan pending consultation 2023/24

ⁱ **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.

ⁱⁱ **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.

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

^{iv} **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

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

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