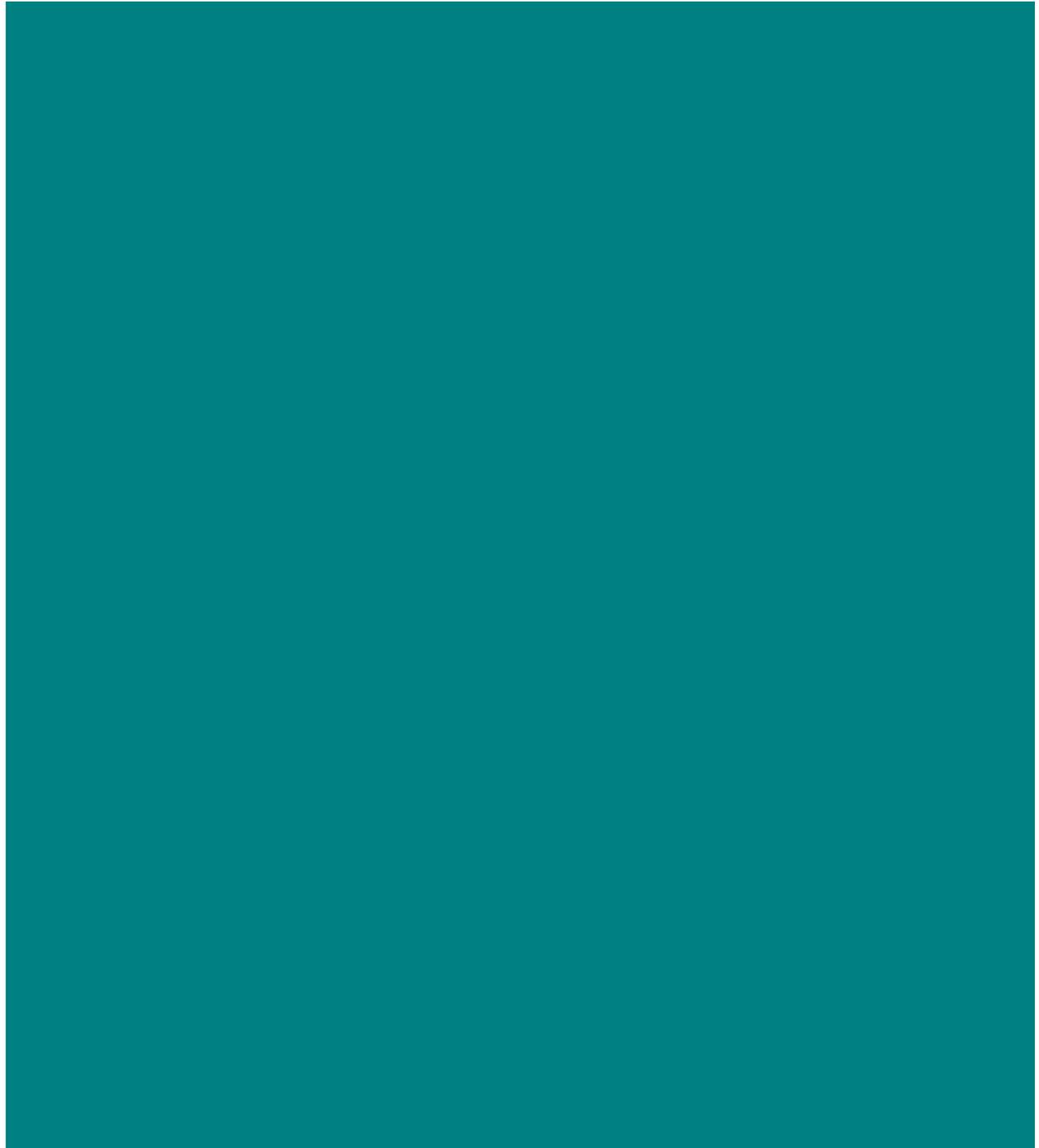




Section 75 Progress Report 2003 - 2004
Report to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland



EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
Public Authority Progress Report 2003 – 2004

safefood

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Section 1: Preparation of Equality Scheme

Outline measures taken during the year to develop the authority's 'draft' Equality Scheme, including consultation, and details of the authority's formal consideration of the 'draft' Equality Scheme, before submission for final approval to the Commission.

Highlight any other areas of the scheme implemented prior to approval of the scheme

Prompt: Were affected groups, staff, service users and groups representing the nine Section 75 categories consulted about the organisation's 'draft' scheme.

safefood submitted its draft Equality Scheme for approval in June 2003 – before the year under report; the draft Scheme was approved by the Equality Commission at the start of the year under report – June 2003.

Section 2: Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Duties

Please enter any specific progress on implementation of the good relations duty under section 11 of this template.

Outline evidence of progress made in developing/meeting equality and good relations objectives, performance indicators and targets and inclusion of these in corporate and annual operating plans. Your response should include any targets for 2004-2005.

Outline steps taken to work with other public authorities in progressing the duties.

Outline any details of partnership work developed or further progressed with the voluntary and/or community sector as a consequence of Section 75 work.

Indicate if Section 75 is a standard agenda item for Board and/or Senior Management Team on a quarterly basis.

Please provide details of the direct resourcing of Section 75 work during 2003 –4. This should include staff appointed/directed (not names) to specifically advance work on equality scheme delivery, and details of any budget allocation to specifically deliver equality scheme commitments.

Outline any factors that enhanced or impeded the process of Strategic Implementation during the period.

Prompt: Have the Board and Senior Officers reviewed the authority's progress report? Has responsibility for equality been agreed and designated within the authority? Has a clearly defined organisational structure with resources for implementation of the duties and assessment of policies been established? Are equality objectives built into the job descriptions and performance targets of relevant staff, and are these reflected in the appraisal process?

- Our Equality Scheme was approved in June 2003.
- We are currently developing an equality training programme for the entire organisation. **safefood** has, however, already run two equality training workshops for all staff. Equality (and s75) training is also included as part of the induction programme for all new staff.
- Targeted training has also already been given to a cross directorate team to enable them to carry out screening and EQIAs. This team is now developing the screening and EQIA programme.

- The CEO has identified the Director of Planning and Resources as the nominated individual responsible for implementing equality. He is assisted in this by the HR Executive.
- **safefood** is reviewing its annual proposals for budgetary expenditure on equality. As a new body this will be considered in the round of negotiations for all budgetary heads. Direct resources have already been allocated to equality through senior and middle-management staff time and revenue expenditure including training, consultancy advice on compliance and best practice, and costs associated with advertising and promoting equality.
- Under the Republic of Ireland National Partnership Agreement - Sustaining Progress - performance management systems are to be implemented throughout the civil/public service before the end of 2004. As we operate under the auspices of the Department of Health and Children, and are a new body, this will directly affect our systems and, therefore, there is no formal performance development system yet in place. **safefood** has thus not yet been able to develop equality objectives, but will do so as part of the NPA proposals.
- It is planned to amend all job descriptions to reflect the need to be aware of and act in accordance with the requirements of Section 75. Currently the job descriptions for the following posts reflect equality and S75 requirements: the CEO, the Director of Planning and Resources, the Finance and Administration Manager and the HR and Administration Executive.
- The Advisory Board meets every three months and is updated on the Equality Scheme and its implementation.
- The business plan for 2005 is currently being finalised. This includes continuing development and implementation of the Equality Scheme.
- An informal partnership has been developed between another cross-border body, Waterways Ireland and **safefood** with regard to exchanging information on policies and equality information to promote learning and best practice.
- Two separate groups at CEO level and Senior HR level have recently been established to further co-operation and commonality between the North-South bodies. One developing strand from this examining how closely the bodies can work together on Section 75.
- **safefood** is a co-sponsor of the Armagh & Dungannon Health Action Zones(HAZ) project entitled 'Decent Food for all' (DFA). This is a community led programme tackling food poverty.
- **safefood** is a member of the Council of the Public Health Alliance.

Overall, **safefood** has experienced some difficulty in proactively implementing its Equality Scheme. This is primarily due to the geographical location of **safefood**'s employment bases in the south, and the fact that no staff are employed in Northern Ireland. Operationally, much of its administration (HR/Finance etc) is dictated by Republic of Ireland legislation. Given the highly specific and technical nature of **safefood**'s statutory remit, many of its policies are very individualistic to **safefood** making it impractical to build up partnerships with other public authorities. Another constraining difficulty is that staffing levels do not include a full time Equality Officer.

Section 3: Screening & Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

2a) If a Screening Report has not yet been submitted to the Commission please advise us on the current position with regard to producing this report and forwarding to the Commission.

2b) If a Screening Report and EQIA Timetable has previously been submitted to the Commission please provide information on the following, in relation to new/proposed/revised policies during 2003-4:

Please list new/proposed/revised policies screened in or out during the period.

Outline any factors that enhanced or impeded the process of policy screening or EQIA.

We have already requested (9 January 2004) that an update on progress regarding EQIAs is forwarded to the Commission. If your authority has not yet forwarded this information (deadline date was 29 February 2004) please do so as a matter of urgency.

2a. The Screening process is currently being undertaken by the Policy Screening Group. This process is complicated for **safefood** given its recent establishment and the need to develop new policies across the organisation. However the screening process is now underway, will be consulted on, and those policies to be subject to a full Equality Impact Assessment will be identified and scheduled for review over the next five years. When the process is complete a report on the process will be prepared for the Equality Commission for inclusion in next year's Progress Report.

Section 4: Training

Indicate your organisation's progress on delivery of Section 75 related training and development during the period. Please state if the training is provided within a 5-year Training Plan.

Outline details of staff and Management Board/Committee training associated with the Section 75 duties/Equality Scheme requirements. Provide details of types of training provision (e.g. general awareness raising, specialist training on EQIA, Screening, and Consultation) and who this training was provided for.

Please provide details of training on awareness raising (for new staff) and refresher training (for existing staff). Provide details of how affected groups have been involved in the development and/or delivery of training. Provide a summary of any training evaluations and comments on the benefits of such training. Provide details of arrangements to review training needs as a result of staff recruitment, promotion or reorganisation. Outline any factors that enhanced or impeded the processes of Section 75 training during the period.

Prompt: Does the authority monitor attainment of the training objectives contained within its equality scheme? Has Section 75 training involved input from representatives of the nine categories? If so please state how this happened and if it proved useful? Has Section 75 training been evaluated? If so, how has this happened and what are the lessons learned?

To date, two equality awareness training programmes have been delivered in November 2002 and February 2004.

- The first day course was delivered to all staff and explained the different anti-discrimination and equality legislation in Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland. It also explained the purpose of Section 75 and what was meant by screening, consultation and EQIAs.
- The second day course was a general refresher on equality and Section 75, and a general awareness of what equality meant
- All staff attended both courses.
- Specialist interactive training on screening and EQIAs has been delivered to three members who have formed the Policy Screening Group.
- Training on consultation techniques is currently being arranged for staff whose roles would involve frequent consultation with stakeholders
- A five year equality training programme is being prepared and will include yearly awareness training for new staff members. As part of this training, representatives from the nine categories will be asked to make presentations.

- To date, as **safefood** is still developing systems and procedures, we have not introduced training evaluation. Evaluation systems are targeted for introduction at the end of 2004 and will be tied in with Performance Management Development systems. However informal feedback on existing courses undertaken has indicated a good level of awareness and sensitivity to the equality issues discussed.

Section 5: Communication

*Provide details of internal and external communication of the authority's commitment to the statutory duties.
Provide details of how the authority communicates progress on delivery of the statutory duties.
Provide details of any review of communication activities to ensure effective communication on progressing the statutory duties.*

*Prompt: Do the Board and/or Senior Officers promote the authority's equality objectives in public statements, interviews and external events such as conferences?
Does the authority have a plan for communication of progress on implementation of the statutory duties?*

As a new organization much of safe food's contact with the public has been through external recruitment campaigns. These all indicate a public commitment to **safefood**'s equality objectives.

We intend to communicate our progress on s75 in our Annual Reports, our Progress Reports to the Equality Commission, and other publications as appropriate.

Section 6: Data Collection & Analysis

Describe any systems that have been established to supplement your available statistical and qualitative research, including consideration given to using internal organisational data and external networks.

Describe any systems established to monitor the future adverse impact of policies that have been equality impact assessed.

Outline any factors that enhanced or impeded the process of data collection and analysis during the period.

Prompt: Has an audit of data sources been undertaken? Are the results of awareness or satisfaction surveys used to inform the development and review of policies? Is relevant external data (for example Census, workforce profiles, customer surveys, and focus groups) used to inform policy development? Have new information systems been linked to arrangements for screening policies?

As a new body, to date, no audit of data sources has been undertaken. As policies are subject to Equality Impact Assessment the impact of policies on equality groups will be assessed using available data. If relevant data is not available at this time consideration will be given to developing data, as far as this is practicable.

Section 7: Information Provision, Access to Information and Services

Outline what action has been taken to review and develop arrangements for the provision of information in accessible formats.

Detail steps taken to audit/improve arrangements to make affected groups more aware of information disseminated by the authority and the services it provides.

Describe any arrangements to develop monitoring systems regarding access to information and services to ensure equality of opportunity.

Outline any factors that enhanced or impeded the process of information provision and ensuring/improving access to services during the period.

Prompt: Are alternative formats provided where appropriate to enable people from across the nine Section 75 categories to have access to all services? Does the authority monitor uptake of services as a standard procedure?

safefood has compiled a database of sources to assist in the provision of information in accessible formats. The policy currently under development is to provide alternative formats and minority ethnic languages upon request.

The policy for providing advice and information is likely to be subject to a full Equality Impact Assessment as a result of the screening process currently under way. A comprehensive review of the ways in which information and services are provided, and in which equality can better be promoted, will be undertaken at that stage.

Section 8: Complaints

Identify the number of formal Section 75 complaints received by the authority during the period.

Identify the number of these Section 75 complaints which were resolved during the period.

Identify the number of these Section 75 complaints which are in the process of being resolved.

Identify the number of these Section 75 complaints which were not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.

Prompt: Does the authority have in place a Section 75 complaints procedure? Does the authority monitor Section 75 complaints and the issues arising? Have complaints led to policy changes or an undertaking of an Equality Impact Assessment of a policy relating to a complaint?

A Section 75 complaints procedure is formally laid down in the Equality Scheme. **safefood** has received two complaints following the approval of its Scheme in June 2003. The first complaint was received at the same time as the complainant filed a complaint against discrimination under the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order

and therefore both cases are with **safefood**'s solicitors. The second complaint is currently being addressed by the Director of Planning and Resources.

Section 9: Timetable

Provide an update of your equality scheme implementation timetable, identifying any changes since your previous report. Please detail planned actions undertaken during the year and planned actions outstanding.

Prompt: Is the authority on course to complete the commitments in its 5-year timetable? If not what action is being taken to ensure completion of timetable commitments?

Do Board and Senior Officers review the implementation timetable on a regular basis?

With regards to the Equality Scheme Implementation timetable the situation is as follows:

- A screening timetable detailing policies to be reviewed as full Equality Impact Assessments over five years is currently being developed.
- A communications strategy is being developed for EQIA consultation.
- An equality of opportunity training programme is currently being developed – and several training events have already been held (see above)
- The recruitment policy has been reviewed to ensure equality of opportunity for all.
- A database of providers has been developed to ensure that we can provide information in accessible formats on request.

The commitment to have these objectives finished was made for Year One. Due to staffing constraints as the organization develops, and the initial difficulties faced in ascertaining requirements for Northern Ireland, this will now be achieved by Year Two.

Section 10: Consultation, participation and engagement

Provide details of organisational arrangements for managing Section 75 consultation exercises and processes e.g. system, processes, methods and communication channels used.

Provide details of processes adopted to participate/engage with affected groups.

Prompt: Describe the system put in place by the authority to plan and manage consultation exercises. What are the main consultation methods that you have used?

Have consultation exercises involved consulting on equality/good relations in conjunction with other policy development/review areas e.g. best value, good practice reviews?

Has the authority used the existing communication channels of groups or consortia within the voluntary/community sector? If so please give examples and comment on the usefulness of using such mechanisms.

Have consultation exercises been 'joined-up', in relation to consulting on similar policies at the same time or in relation to joint consultation exercises with other public authorities?

Has the authority developed an overall strategy, plans or processes to engage directly with representatives of affected groups? If so what mechanisms have been used and have benefits been realised?

Has consultation/participation been evaluated and improved during the period? Has evaluation led to better approaches to engagement with affected groups?

safefood has engaged in one consultation exercise in connection with its s75 obligations – consultation on its draft Equality Scheme. **safefood** will also consult on its screening programme and its Equality Impact Assessment Reports. **safefood** has carried out its initial consultation in accordance with its Equality Scheme. It has presented information to the list of consultees provided in the Equality Scheme and advertised the consultation in the local Press. Information has been offered in different formats and in minority ethnic languages on request. **safefood** has also offered to meet with any interested groups in the consultation. The standards adopted in the first consultation exercise will be continued in future consultations.

Section 11: The Good Relations duty

Provide details of steps to progress the good relations duty, such as undertaking a good relations audit, developing a strategy or providing training.

Prompt: What steps has the authority undertaken to promote the good relations duty?

Has the authority developed a strategy for implementing good relations? If so please provide details of the key elements of this.

Has the authority undertaken an audit of its policies that impact on good relations?

What models or approaches to good relations has the authority adopted?

Has the authority worked in partnership with other public authorities or other bodies to develop its approach to promotion of good relations?

Have any policies been changed to better address the promotion of good relations? If so please provide some detail on these.

safefood has incorporated training on good relations in the training it has already provided to key staff but is awaiting further guidance in this area as it develops a strategy. Part of this involves **safefood** determining a stakeholder base and developing a strategy from this.

However, other examples of good relations duty partnerships have been established by:

National Food Safety Week (NFSW) is a UK wide initiative organised by the education arm of the UK Food and Drink Federation (FDF) – Foodlink. For NFSW 2004, **safefood** worked in conjunction with the Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland (FSANI) and a team of food safety liaison managers which comprise Environmental Health representatives from all district councils. The project involved the targeting of church halls, community halls and other local parish venues where food is prepared for various occasions. The project had a multi-denominational focus.

The Armagh & Dungannon Health Action Zones (HAZ) project entitled 'Decent Food for all' (DFA). This is a community led programme tackling food poverty. The mission of DFA is 'to improve the provision and consumption of affordable, safe and healthy food in order to protect and improve public health particularly among the disadvantaged and vulnerable'. The programme is implemented by community food team of the Armagh and Dungannon HAZ group. It is jointly sponsored by **safefood** and the Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland FSANI. An operational group was established at the outset to oversee and direct the community food team.

The operational group comprises representatives from:

- Armagh & Dungannon HSST
- Southern Group Environmental Health Committee
- Youth Action
- Food Standards Agency
- Sure Start
- Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council
- Help the Aged
- SAHPD
- Ulster Farmers Union
- Educations Guidance Service for Adults
- Area Dental Service
- DELTA parenting project
- Dungannon CAB

The aim of Decent Food for All DFA programme sponsored by **safefood** is to encourage and support local communities, families and individuals to achieve a balanced, safe diet by providing practical, community-based and focused help and advice on food issues and nutrition. The programme runs over 3 years. The project incorporates four essential elements:

- Community education
- Individual empowerment to permit healthy lifestyle choices
- Regeneration of local communities and markets
- Sustainability

The first stage of the programme involved securing commitment and engagement from partners and developing an agreed program proposal based on local needs and priorities. The selection of the areas in which to implement the programme was determined, in part, by the factors that are known to influence poverty (eg: material disadvantage and geographical access to food). Area-based measures were used to quantify these characteristics. An assessment of the community infrastructure was then undertaken which involved identifying all the potential groups, their interest and any networks/settings which could be used to deliver the programme, eg: mother and toddler group/olderpersons group/church group. Before delivery in the intervention areas pilots of all individual programmes to be rolled out under DFA were undertaken. There are now a range of community based programmes which have been developed and delivered by the community food teams.

Member of the Council of the Public Health Alliance. The aim is to be the voice of public health in Northern Ireland and advocates sustainable policies and action that reduces inequalities in health. This is pursued by

building alliances and partnerships with communities, organizations and other statutory bodies. The membership is about 100 and includes:

- Programme of Action for Children
- Pavee Point Travellers Centre
- NDA.

Section 12: Impacts and outcomes

Please provide relevant information about the impact of implementation of Section 75 to end of March 2004. Information provided should be in relation to outputs and outcomes being achieved. Also clarify the outcomes which have impacted on the authority, in terms of efficiency or effectiveness, and outcomes for people in the nine categories.

This could include: details of existing policies changed to better deliver equality of opportunity; incorporation of the EQIA process into policy development; information about impact of new policy (better service provision, alternative service provision, accessibility to services, information gathering on users/non-users of services, satisfaction survey information); information on improved policy/services for the nine categories.

Prompt: How is policy formulation being managed to take account of the need to mainstream the Section 75 duties? Are all new or revised policies equality proofed by the authority? If so what processes are used? Is the 7 step EQIA process mainstreamed into policy processes?

Is there any evidence of how newly formulated policies, or existing policies changed as a result of impact assessment, are better delivering equality and/or good relations?

Has EQIA led to better policy making and service delivery? Please provide specific examples. These should indicate which Section 75 groups have benefited from policy changes and how.

What, at this stage, do you perceive to be the main outcomes from implementation of the statutory duties?

Since the screening process has not yet been completed, no policies have yet been revised as a result of equality proofing. However as a result of beginning to implement its Equality Scheme **safefood** has increased awareness of equality and diversity issues amongst key decision-makers and all staff within the organisation.

Section 13: Additional comments on Mainstreaming

The main aim of the statutory duties is to help to mainstream equality of opportunity and good relations considerations into the functions of the authority, leading to better policies and service delivery.

Whilst many of the questions in the previous sections of this template relate to actions on mainstreaming of Section 75 duties we would be grateful if you could provide any additional information/comment which you think may be relevant to your report. You may wish to report here on your view of the:

- extent of mainstreaming of the duties within the authority
- benefits for the authority resulting from mainstreaming
- factors which have impeded mainstreaming
- plans for future effective mainstreaming of the duties.

safefood was established recently as a new cross-border body. As such it is still developing its systems, processes and ways of working to meet its statutory remit across the island. One of the practical challenges under s75, as highlighted above, is that no staff are employed in Northern Ireland, and that emphasis therefore needs to be placed on ensuring that all staff are aware of the implications of their actions for stakeholders in Northern Ireland.

For that reason **safefood** has prioritised equality and s75 training for all staff and targeted training for staff with specialist responsibilities under s75. This will assist staff to mainstream equality in their general work from the start.

The screening process has taken some time because the organisation is currently determining appropriate systems and procedures for its operations. However concerted efforts are under way to complete screening, including consultation, and work towards a 5 year programme of policy impact assessments on those issues which are likely to have a significant impact on equality.

Section 14: Concluding questions

This short questionnaire is included in the template to enable you to, provide an overall view of the effectiveness of the statutory duties, for your authority and for the Section 75 categories.

QUESTION A

Does the authority believe its work to date on implementing the statutory duties has produced positive benefits for the organisation? (Please tick) YES ___✓___ NO _____

If you answered yes to QUESTION A, please tick appropriate boxes below to what extent the duties have:

	Very noticeably	Noticeably	No real change
Increased awareness of equality issues in policy making	✓		
Increased ability to ensure policies are designed and targeted to reflect equal opportunities objectives		✓	
Increased awareness of good relations issues in policy making		✓	
Increased ability to ensure policies are designed and targeted to reflect good relations objectives		✓	
Increased awareness of equality issues in service delivery	✓		
Increased ability to ensure services are designed and targeted to reflect Section 75 requirements			✓

QUESTION B

Does the authority believe its work to date on implementing the statutory duties has produced positive benefits for groups within the Section 75 categories? (Please tick) YES___ NO_✓

If you answered yes to QUESTION B, please tick appropriate boxes below on what extent the authority's implementation of the statutory duties has increased equality of opportunity for

	Very noticeably	Noticeably	No real change
Persons of different religious belief			
Persons of different political opinion			
Persons of different racial groups			
Persons of different age			
Persons with different marital status			
Persons of different sexual orientation			
Men and women generally			
Persons with and without a disability			
Persons with and without dependents			