

The
Electoral
Commission

Equality Scheme

2014

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Translations and other formats

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Tel: 020 7271 0500

Textphone: 18001 020 7271 0500

Email: publications@electoralcommission.org.uk

We are an independent body set up by the UK Parliament. Our aim is integrity and public confidence in the democratic process. We regulate party and election finance and set standards for well-run elections.

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Please note: Foreword and Appendices A,B,C and D form part of this scheme

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Foreword

This is the Electoral Commission's equality scheme for Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It sets out how we aim to promote equality and diversity as an employer and through our work on effective regulation of party and election finance and setting standards for well-run elections and electoral registration.

Like all public bodies in Great Britain, we are legally required to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into effect on 5 April 2011. We must also meet our equality duties under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and must also comply with the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the Welsh Language Measure 2011 in Wales¹.

On behalf of the Electoral Commission we are pleased to endorse this scheme, which aims to meet all these requirements and respond to the needs of our stakeholders across all protected groups in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It outlines how the Commission is structured to meet all our equality commitments and sets out:

- what we do
- our equality priorities and objectives
- how we will implement our scheme
- our equality scheme action plan – the tool we will use to achieve our aims

In our action plan we detail the measures we will be taking to achieve our equality objectives set out in the scheme. These measures address our approach to delivering services, employment and procurement. Progress will be monitored by the Commission's equality and diversity group, which reports to our Management Team and delivers six-monthly progress reports to the Executive Team. We will publish details of our progress annually.

Overarching responsibility to deliver our scheme rests with the Chief Executive. Responsibility for achieving our equality objectives is collective and the Executive Team will lead work across the Commission to ensure that we accomplish them.



Peter Wardle, Chief Executive



Jenny Watson, Chair

¹ The Electoral Commission Welsh Language Scheme is available here http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/99653/Welsh-Lang-Scheme-2010-04-Final.pdf

1 About the Electoral Commission – our vision

1.1 The Electoral Commission is an independent body set up by the UK Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000

Our principles for free elections that support a healthy democracy

- **Trust:** people should be able to trust the way our elections and our political finance system work
- **Participation:** it should be straightforward for people to participate in our elections and our political finance system, whether voting or campaigning; and people should be confident that their vote counts
- **No undue influence:** there should be no undue influence in the way our elections and our political finance system work

Our objectives for free elections that support a healthy democracy

1) Well-run elections, referendums and electoral registration

We want people throughout the United Kingdom to be confident that:

- registering to vote and taking part in elections is straightforward, accessible and secure
- they will receive a consistently high quality of service, wherever they live and whichever elections or referendums are being held.

2) Transparency in party and election finance, with high levels of compliance

We want people throughout the United Kingdom to be confident that:

- there is transparency about party and election finance, so that people know where money comes from and how it is spent
- people who want to stand for election, and people and organisations that want to campaign at elections, can easily find out how to get involved, what the rules are, and what they need to do to comply with those rules

- the rules on party and election finance are followed, and those who do not follow them are dealt with appropriately and effectively
- political parties, candidates and campaigners can participate in elections without unnecessary barriers

Our Approach

We are committed to the United Kingdom's strong tradition of **free elections**, which are an essential part of a **healthy democracy**.

We:

- work to **serve the people** of the United Kingdom
- are committed to **protecting and promoting** democracy
- put **voters first**

We will **seek change** where the evidence shows that it is needed to serve the people of the United Kingdom, and their democracy, better.

Our responsibilities

We are responsible for:

- registering political parties
- making sure people understand and follow the rules on party and election finance
- publishing details of where parties and candidates get money from and how they spend it
- setting the standards for electoral registration and running elections, and reporting on how well this is done
- making sure people understand it is important to register to vote, and know how to vote
- running any referendums held in accordance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000

We are not responsible for:

- Running and administering elections in the United Kingdom. The administration of the electoral process in Great Britain is the responsibility of Returning Officers. In Northern Ireland, this is the role of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO).
- Maintaining the electoral register. In Great Britain this is the responsibility of local authorities, and in Northern Ireland it is the responsibility of the CEO.

Our structures

1.2 The Electoral Commission Board currently comprises 10 Commissioners, one of whom is the Chair. All Commissioners are appointed by Her Majesty the Queen. The Commission is accountable to the UK Parliament, and specifically to a Committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons.

1.3 The current Electoral Commissioners are: Jenny Watson (Chair), Max Caller CBE, Anna Carragher, Gareth Halliwell, Tony Hobman, Lord Horam, David Howarth, John McCormick, Alasdair Morgan and Bridget Prentice. They are responsible for the work of the organisation and set our strategic direction.

1.4 The executive team support Commissioners by providing day-to-day leadership to implement our corporate plan. The Commission's executive team members are: Peter Wardle (Chief Executive), Carolyn Hughes (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Corporate Services), Peter Horne (Director of Party and Election Finance), Alex Robertson (Director of Communication) and Andrew Scallan (Director of Electoral Administration).

1.5 We have offices in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast, and staff based in Exeter, London, Coventry and York that cover the regions of England. A diagram of our corporate structure is attached at Appendix C.

1.6 Full details of our performance each year are published in our annual report. Details of our corporate priorities and objectives and our annual report may be found on our website at www.electoralcommission.org.uk/publications-and-research

1.7 We publish summaries of our equality impact assessments and regular reports on our progress in meeting our equality and diversity objectives. This information can be found at <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/about-us/equality-and-diversity>

Working at the Commission

1.8 The Commission's overarching human resources (HR) equality and diversity objectives are set out in our corporate Human Resources strategy for 2014-15 to 2019-20. Our HR activities in relation to equality and diversity ensure that we meet our duties under the relevant legislation.

1.9 The Commission has a number of policies and practices that demonstrate our commitment to equality and diversity. For example:

- enhanced flexible working and leave policies
- the inclusion of health and wellbeing in our HR strategy
- an employee assistance programme offering support 365 days a year for staff and family members
- Anticipatory adjustments with further reasonable adjustments upon request
- a childcare voucher scheme
- a broad learning and development programme and framework that all employees are encouraged to access
- grievance, disciplinary, capability and dignity at work policies that support our commitment to equality of opportunity

1.10 Current practices to support our equality objectives include:

- Workforce data collection and monitoring of staff by race, disability, gender and age to inform our policy screenings and revise our policies accordingly.
- We also capture information from our recruitment and selection exercises, staff promotion and learning and development programme.
- We monitor our staff turnover and carry out an analysis of data collected at exit interviews on a half-yearly basis.
- We seek to develop our data collection to make improvements during annual reviews of our policies and procedures
- Our HR policies are reviewed regularly and changes made in line with legislation and best practice. Policies and procedures are revised outside of our yearly reviews if required
- We review our HR strategy regularly to ensure that it continues to meet the requirements of the Equality Act and section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, and in particular to ensure that we meet the standards set out in relevant codes of practice.
- Our performance review scheme includes an appeals process for staff. The Commission collates and analyses the performance appraisal data to identify and eliminate any unfair treatment resulting from the performance assessment process.
- Equality and diversity is an integral feature of our performance framework. All staff are encouraged to display appropriate behaviours and are assessed annually.
- Our staff learning and development programme includes equality and diversity training.
- We ensure that learning and development opportunities are available to all staff and that interventions recognise diversity of learning styles and abilities.
- Our induction programme also includes equality and diversity training which all new staff are required to complete. This covers the organisation's and individuals' responsibilities under equality legislation. We also run equality and diversity training sessions for all staff and detailed equality impact assessment training for policy owners. Compulsory Welsh Language training is given to staff with responsibility for dealing with our stakeholders in Wales. Equality and diversity are

built into other training programmes as appropriate. More information on our equality training arrangements is set out in section 4

Accessibility

1.11 The Commission is committed to ensuring equal access to employment opportunities, learning and development, and promotion. We are a diverse and inclusive workforce that respects, values and reflects the wider community we serve.

1.12 We strive to achieve equality of opportunity in our recruitment practices. To achieve this we ensure the following:

- No job applicant will receive less favourable treatment than another on the grounds of race, disability, gender, marital status, age, religion or belief, political opinion, caring responsibilities or sexuality.
- The 'two ticks positive about disabled people' process is part of our recruitment process to welcome people with a disability.
- No conditions or requirements are imposed during the recruitment and selection process which will unfairly affect applicants from one group more than those from other groups.
- All applicants are asked to let us know in advance of any special arrangements that we should make during the recruitment and selection process.
- Any qualifications, conditions or requirements applied to a job are relevant and justifiable in the terms of the job to be undertaken.

2 How equality law applies to the Commission

2.1 Before the Equality Act 2010, the Electoral Commission had a statutory duty² to produce four separate equality schemes, and we put in place a Race Equality Scheme, a Disability Equality Scheme and a Gender Equality Scheme. We also published a separate statutory equality scheme for Northern Ireland.

Public sector equality duty

2.2 The Equality Act 2010 introduced a new public sector equality duty which replaced the race, disability and gender equality duties. The duty applies in England, Scotland and Wales.

2.3 The public sector equality duty is also referred to as the 'general duty'. It is set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and covers age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. A definition of these protected groups can be found in the glossary on page 65.

2.4 The general duty requires us to have 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- foster good relations between different groups

2.5 Due regard means we must properly consider the need to do these things, taking into account our purpose and our requirement to spend public money effectively.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

2.6 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Commission to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

² The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination (Amendment) Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2006.

- between people of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- between men and women generally
- between people with a disability and people without, and
- between people with dependants and people without

A definition of these protected groups can be found in the glossary on page 65.

2.7 We must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

2.8 We report annually to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on our equalities progress and our specific arrangements for Northern Ireland are set out in more detail in appendix A of this scheme.

Welsh Language Act 1993 and Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011

2.9 Under section 5 of the Welsh Language Act 1993 we are required to prepare a scheme which sets out the measures we propose to take to use the Welsh language in the provision of our services to the public in Wales. Our scheme can be viewed on our website: www.electoralcommission.org.uk

2.10 The Welsh Language Measure 2011 requires us to treat the Welsh and English languages equally when providing services to the public in Wales.

Human Rights Act 1998

2.11 Under the Human Rights Act it is unlawful for us to act in a way that is incompatible with the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights. Article 14 protects against discrimination in enjoying these rights on the basis of any ground, including sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status. Most of these rights have been built into the Equality Act, Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, and Welsh language legislation.

2.12 Article 3, protocol 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights guarantees the right to free elections.

2.13 This scheme and our equality scheme action plan have been designed with this legislation in mind. They are living documents and we will update them as necessary to ensure that we meet the requirements of new equality legislation as it is introduced.

3 Our equality priorities

3.1 The Commission has a diverse audience. The right to vote in the UK extends to all adult UK, Irish and Commonwealth citizens who are ordinarily resident in the UK, with a small number of specific exceptions. Citizens of European Union member states resident in the UK are entitled to vote in local and European Parliament elections. The scope of our work is highly relevant to equality and we see this as an exceptional opportunity to promote equality and good relations.

3.2 Our achievements to date are set out in progress reports, published on our website. Going forward, the Commission's equality and diversity objectives are to:

- ensure that everyone who is eligible is able to participate in the democratic process, by identifying barriers, making recommendations and working with others to remove them
- ensure that we embed equality and diversity in all our work, treat all our customers fairly and with respect, and are transparent in the decisions we make
- ensure equality of opportunity for everyone at the Commission and ensure that all our staff are treated fairly and with respect

3.3 We will deliver these objectives in our roles as a watchdog, regulator, employer and procurer of goods and services through the following activities.

3.4 As the independent elections watchdog and party funding regulator we will:

- comply with equality legislation across the UK
- identify gaps in our evidence and develop a robust base of equality information to inform the development and implementation of the Commission's policies and practices
- conduct equality impact assessments on our policies to eliminate potential negative impacts on protected groups
- publish summaries of our findings and regular progress reports on equality and diversity

3.5 As an employer we will:

- conduct equality impact assessments and analyse the impact of all human resources policies and practices
- implement continuing equality and diversity training to update staff on new legislation and ensure awareness of emerging best practice and evidence of inequalities

- conduct equal pay audits.

3.6 As a procurer of goods and services we have made substantial progress in the first year of this scheme by completing an extensive equality impact assessment (EIA) of the Commission's entire procurement function. We are now in the process of delivering our procurement EIA action plan, which includes:

- developing our procedures for monitoring the equality outcomes of our procurement processes
- using our procurement processes to further promote equality of opportunity
- continuing to stay abreast of emerging good practice in procurement and revising our procedures accordingly

3.7 We have identified these objectives on the basis of our work to date. As we progress and implement our scheme we will revise and update our objectives to reflect the outcomes of our analysis of equality information and our consultation with staff, the public and other stakeholders.

3.8 The structures and arrangements that we have put in place to ensure the successful implementation of this scheme, including the action plan, are set out in Section 5.

4 Our Training Arrangements

Our Commitment to staff training

4.1 The Electoral Commission is committed to the continuous development of its staff and we recognise the important contribution that training makes to our effectiveness.

4.2 Training is a vital part of making sure that we are all aware of our equality duties under the Equality Act 2010 in England, Scotland and Wales; under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and under the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011 in Wales.

4.3 In order to communicate our commitment to our equality duties and ensure that staff have the skills to comply with them, we have developed an equality and diversity training programme for all staff at the Commission. This includes induction training, which covers the range of legislation and sets out why the Equality Duty, Section 75, and the Welsh language legislation are such an important part of our work.

4.4 Through our equality and diversity training programme we also aim to communicate that this is an integral part of everyone's job.

Training Objectives

4.5 We aim to ensure staff have the knowledge to perform effectively and our learning and development policy sets out how we deliver training to achieve this, including:

- compulsory training for induction
- training to brief all staff on new or changed statutes and regulations
- skills development
- training in new ways of working

4.6 Our equality and diversity training programme aims to address all these aspects.

Training arrangements

e-learning module

4.7 In order to ensure that all our staff and board members are aware of our equality obligations, we have developed a compulsory 'e-learning' equality module and use modules available through the Civil Service Learning website. Our training covers:

- the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty
- section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998
- the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the Welsh Language Measure 2011
- our single equality scheme and our Welsh language scheme
- what equality impact assessments are and why they are a fundamental part of how we develop our policies

4.8 The 'e-learning' equality module has been completed by all our staff and arrangements have been undertaken to brief all our board members. All staff are required to repeat training every two years.

Know-how workshops

4.9 Our equality 'know-how' training workshop explains how equality law applies to our work at the Commission by showcasing our equality scheme and outlining everyone's role in contributing to our equality objectives. The workshop aims to demystify this area of our work and provide an opportunity to ask questions and share information. We set out the relevant discrimination legislation and consider the evidence base and the legal differences across the UK. We also consider the background to the legislation so as to understand clearly our equality duties as a public body and we explore the procedures we follow to comply with the law, using relevant case studies to practice on.

Equality impact assessment training

4.10 We have developed equality impact assessment guidance in the form of a 'toolkit' to support staff in carrying out assessments. The toolkit includes a 'quick-start' guide and covers all our equality commitments across the United Kingdom, including the 'protected characteristics' set out in the Equality Act 2010, the equality groups set out in s75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and the Welsh language legislation.

4.11 Training to carry out equality impact assessment screening is available to all staff at the Commission. We aim to deliver 'function specific' training to those staff undertaking impact assessments. This approach relates our equality impact assessment training to staff's specialisms and includes support when it is most needed.

Welsh language training

4.12 The Welsh language is addressed in our compulsory equality and diversity 'e-learning' module to ensure that all staff are fully aware of the official status of the Welsh language in Wales. Colleagues who deal with our stakeholders in Wales and have particular responsibility for material produced in both Welsh and English, are given additional training which covers:

- why we need to be Welsh language aware within the Commission
- what we need to know about the Welsh language and its speakers, including some history of the Welsh language
- the Commission's statutory Welsh language scheme
- how to plan and provide services appropriately in the Welsh language

4.13 We also provide relevant team managers with Welsh language information regularly, as part of team briefing updates. Welsh language training will continue in order to maintain awareness within the Commission of the commitments we have set out in our Welsh language scheme.

4.14 we have a Welsh language Adviser to help with any internal or external queries regarding the Welsh language and the Commission's Welsh Language Scheme

4.15 In accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act we will train relevant staff carrying out consultations to ensure that they have the necessary skills to communicate effectively with consultees.

Training monitoring

4.16 Human Resources monitor and evaluate the implementation of our learning and development plan to ensure that:

- staff attend training events– a central record is kept
- the training is of a high standard and meets its objectives - completion of a post course evaluation form helps us to ensure the training meets participants' needs
- training is accessible and there are no barriers to participation

4.17 Line managers must encourage workplace learning and ensure all staff benefit from the impact of training. Staff's individual learning and development progress is monitored through our performance review procedure

5 Implementing our scheme

Our approach

5.1 The Electoral Commission operates across the United Kingdom and this is reflected in our single equality scheme and our approach to equality and diversity generally. Where our work covers the whole of the UK, we will take steps to ensure that we meet the appropriate standards required by law. At a local level, we will always aim to comply with the relevant legislation.

5.2 We made revisions to our first edition of this single equality scheme following our consultation, which ended in October 2010. We also reviewed the scheme in January 2011 to ensure it met the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a living document, the scheme is updated to address evidence of inequalities and legislative requirements as these arise. Our decision to develop a single scheme that covers our equality commitments across the whole of the United Kingdom fits with this process.

5.3 We have incorporated our duties under s75 of the Northern Ireland Act so as to bring all our equality activities into a single scheme. Our arrangements specifically for Northern Ireland are set out in appendix A.

5.4 In addition, we have:

- revised the format of our scheme
- revised and updated the action plan and our schedule for conducting equality impact assessments contained in the scheme

5.5 We have taken these measures to make this scheme accessible, and in the knowledge that our equality tools must be user-friendly to secure the best possible standards of implementation of our policy objectives. With all our equality plans and objectives contained in a single accessible scheme, we aim to improve our delivery on equality across the UK.

5.6 In conjunction with our equality impact assessment guidance, our Welsh Language Scheme and the evidence we gather to inform our policy decisions, this scheme is well placed to achieve this.

5.7 All our equality information can be accessed from a single point on our website: <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/about-us/equality-and-diversity>

5.8 We are committed to ensuring the resources necessary to implement this scheme.

Assessing relevance, Stage 1 and Stage 2 equality impact assessments

5.9 The consideration of risk is an integral part of effective decision-making and planning within the Commission. These processes have to be underpinned with reliable evidence. Equality impact assessments (EIAs) support our approach to evidence-based policy making. An EIA is a tool which enables us to consider the potential impact of our policies on different groups. It also helps us to consider ways in which our policies can promote equality and foster (pay regard to in Northern Ireland) good relations.

5.10 In the first year of our scheme, we revised our EIA guidance to ensure legal compliance across the UK. The revised guidance, in the form of a 'toolkit' aims to comply with the Equality Act 2010; section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, and the Welsh language legislation. It has been approved by the Electoral Commission's equality and diversity group and is supported by compulsory equality and diversity training for all staff, which sets out our commitment to carrying out EIAs. We also deliver specialist training and support to colleagues who carry out EIAs on new and existing policies.

5.11 We conduct EIAs as part of developing/revising our policies. We use three stages, which are set out in our EIA toolkit. Firstly we screen our policies to establish whether it is relevant to the aims of the duties and which protected characteristics could be affected.

5.12 A summary of the Stage 1 and 2 EIAs is set out below:

Stage 1 EIA

In stage 1 we:

- define the policy and its purpose
- identify all relevant evidence to help evaluate the potential negative impacts of putting the policy into practice.
- identify opportunities to use the policy to promote equality and good relations
- consider the proportionality and relevance of the policy and whether to:
 - screen the policy out as having *no relevance*
 - screen the policy out with mitigation if it has *low* or *medium* relevance
 - screen the policy in for a full, more in-depth equality impact assessment (stage 2) if it has *high* relevance

5.13 For each protected characteristic or group we ask:

- is the potential impact of the policy positive, neutral or negative?
- are potential negative impacts of low, medium or high relevance?

- what are the reasons and supporting evidence for the potential impacts identified?

5.14 In order to answer the screening questions above, we gather all relevant information and data, both qualitative and quantitative. We use this evidence to consider the needs, experiences and priorities for each protected group and inform all our decisions using evidence in this way.

5.15 Stage 1 of our EIA process also enables us to address any low or medium potential negative impacts and mitigate them there and then. We will record any mitigation taken at this stage on our screening template.

Stage 2 EIA

5.16 However, if we determine the policy has potential for high negative impacts on any protected group we proceed with Stage two. If a full stage 2 assessment is required, instructions are included in the toolkit.

5.17 In summary, Stage 2 EIA involves:

1. defining the aims of the policy (this is carried over from stage 1)
2. further consideration of available data and research
3. assessment of potential impacts.
4. consideration of the measures which might mitigate any adverse impact and alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity
5. consultation
6. decision and publication of report on results of EIA
7. monitoring for adverse impact in the future and publication of the results of such monitoring

5.18 All EIAs require us to produce an action plan which sets out how we will mitigate potential negative impacts of the policy and promote equality and good relations. Our EIA action plans also include reviews so outcomes of our policies can be monitored over time and the review should take place at least annually. All EIAs are subjected to consultation including through our Equality and Diversity group for Stage 1, which includes representation across the Commission, trade union, and external groups representing all our stakeholders. Our consultation arrangements for Stage 2 EIA's in Northern Ireland are set out in Appendix A of this scheme.

5.19 A key element of the implementation of our single equality scheme involves screening all of our functions and policies to determine which of them are relevant to the aims of the Equality Duty, section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, and the Welsh language legislation. Assessing relevance was the first step we took to prioritise our work.

5.20 We have compiled a full schedule of our policies and functions (attached in Appendix D), which has been revised to meet all our legal requirements across the UK, including section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act and Welsh language legislation.

5.21 In the schedule, policies have been assigned low, medium or high priority for equality impact assessment. Since first publishing this scheme we have reviewed the scope of individual policies and the schedule has been revised in two ways:

- some policies and procedures have been grouped together for assessment
- the priority for assessment of some policies has been amended

5.22 We aim to conduct EIAs at the start of the policy-making process. We will continue to consult appropriately to reasonable time scales and in accessible ways to minimise the risk of developing policies that have an adverse effect on any group.

5.23 We will ensure that summaries of our EIAs are published on our website and welcome feedback. We will include information in our EIA summaries to demonstrate that information about the needs and experiences of all protected groups has been examined to inform our decisions and we will highlight any potential negative impacts arising from policy proposals and how we intend to mitigate these.

Evidence base – collating and publishing equality information

5.24 In putting together this scheme we gathered data from a range of sources to assess our effectiveness in delivering equality as a regulator, as an employer, and in the way we procure goods and services. This data has informed the actions in our equality scheme action plan attached in Appendix B. The actions support our equality priorities, set out in section 3 of this scheme.

5.25 Individual teams across the Commission will continue to gather evidence of our equality and diversity performance, and assess progress against our equality priorities and the actions set out in the equality scheme action plan.

5.26 We have in place a number of arrangements to collect data which enable us to assess the impact of our policies. Where necessary we will introduce new arrangements to enable us to gather information on specific groups about which we have insufficient information, or where we have identified a need to review or amend our policies. A summary of key data relevant to our work is available on our website. We use this information to supplement specific information to inform our EIAs.

Our research

5.27 The Commission's research and evaluation team produces and commissions research that is used as evidence to inform our decision-making processes. We have a legal duty to review or research a range of electoral and political issues. We can set our own agenda in deciding which issues to review or we may be asked by the Government to review any matters they identify.

5.28 Our research findings ensure that our campaigns and policies can be targeted appropriately to improve service delivery and electoral participation among under-represented groups. All our publications and research can be found here: <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/publications-and-research>

5.29 We use various research methods including:

- public opinion surveys
- consultation with relevant groups and individuals
- advisory groups
- focus groups
- written documents
- web-based consultation
- desktop research

5.30 The Commission also works in partnership with organisations to gather evidence of good practice to inform the work we do with specific groups to increase their levels of registration and participation in elections.

5.31 We also use this information to inform our guidance for Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), local authorities and others.

Reports on elections

5.32 The Commission produces reports on the administration of elections (except local government elections), as well as European Parliamentary elections and certain types of referendum.

5.33 The Commission's election reports give our views on how well the elections were run and identify any issues which may have caused problems for voters. Our reports also consider whether the elections were accessible and make recommendations for improvements. This helps to ensure that elections are accessible to disabled voters, including those with mobility problems and voters with learning impairments, and people with a variety of additional communication needs.

5.34 We use a range of evidence to inform our reports. Representatives from the Commission visit constituencies and gather the views of electoral administrators, parties and voters. We also observe at polling stations on election day and have an accessibility check list to report against. We also survey Returning Officers, Electoral Registration Officers, candidates and agents, as well as carrying out public opinion research.

Employment-related data

5.35 We have arrangements in place to monitor the equality impacts of our employment policies. We gather information about the composition of our workforce:

- the outcome of recruitment and selection exercises
- staff turnover
- access to learning and development opportunities
- grievances and disciplinary actions

5.36 This information is also used to inform our corporate human resources strategy and to ensure that we comply with equality law in our recruitment and employment of staff. We publish employment data in our corporate plan. We employ less than 150 people and the workforce data we publish is therefore limited.

Procurement information

5.37 We are committed to ensuring that when we procure goods and services from external suppliers the people who supply these are committed to equality and diversity and we advise suppliers of their legal obligations under the legislation. They must provide information about their equality policies and set out their arrangements for legal compliance. In order to improve our arrangements in this area, we have conducted a thorough equality impact assessment of our procurement function and are presently delivering our procurement EIA action plan, which includes developing further arrangements for monitoring the equality outcomes of procurement.

Involvement and consultation

5.38 As an organisation we put voters at the heart of all our external activities, and as an employer we value our staff and aim to promote greater participation in the organisation's decision-making processes in order to become an employer of choice. Consultation with our stakeholders and staff is a key part of meeting our duties and delivering our corporate objectives. It is integral to our work and a responsibility that we share across the Commission, with key stakeholders and partners.

5.39 We will consult with the public as necessary to develop a robust evidence base for our decision making. To ensure that we conduct meaningful and effective consultation we will:

- develop representation of our existing equality and diversity group
- explore future partnership working
- proactively seek feedback to monitor our policy outcomes
- share learning with similar organisations to build on the work we do

5.40 We will ensure that our consultation activities enable us to measure the implementation of our single equality scheme. We will provide awareness-raising to staff conducting consultations to ensure effective consultation.

5.41 We will set out to consult with organisations that represent all protected groups and in particular those that evidence indicates are less likely to register to vote or participate in elections and political life, for example, young people, people with learning disabilities and specific ethnic groups.

5.42 We will comply with statutory timescales where applicable in consultations. In any event we will ensure that consultation is accessible and agree appropriate timescales for each consultation event and express a continuing interest in receiving feedback from stakeholders.

5.43 In circumstances where highly relevant policies must be introduced prior to timely consultation we will proactively seek stakeholder feedback to evaluate policy outcomes.

5.44 Our EIA action plans include reviews to monitor the outcomes of our policies.

5.45 Where appropriate, we will outline awareness-raising and information on the section 75 duties with consultees in Northern Ireland. Please see Appendix A (page 28) for further details on our statutory consultation procedures for Northern Ireland.

Our equality and diversity group

5.46 The aim of the Commission's equality and diversity group is to support the Commission in meeting the needs of all our stakeholders by promoting equality and diversity in the delivery of our services; supporting a diverse and inclusive workforce, and promoting best practice in the procurement of goods and services.

5.47 The group comprises senior representatives from each directorate across the Commission and includes trade union representation. External

consultees can be co-opted to the group as necessary. It meets quarterly to monitor progress, and also convenes virtually to lead EIA consultation and internal involvement in equality and diversity issues across the organisation. It provides reports to the Commission's Management Team on the outcomes of its work and annual equality and diversity progress reports to the Commission's Executive Team.

Consultation on this scheme

5.48 In July 2010 we published a draft of this scheme for consultation. We used the comments and feedback we received to improve our scheme and action plan. Consultation arrangements for this revised scheme lasted eight weeks and are now complete and we have used the feedback we received to make further improvements. Going forward, we welcome feedback from our stakeholders for the duration this scheme.

Equality analysis and review

5.49 Analysing the effect of our policies and practices is an important means of complying with our equality duties. We will screen all our policies for relevance to equality and analyse feedback on our EIAs in order to improve our policies and further our equality objectives. We will also publish the results of our findings and the evidence we use to inform our assessments.

5.50 We will continue to review our approach for assessing equality impacts to ensure that it is effective and meets legal requirements.

5.51 We will maintain accurate records of the actions we take to analyse the impacts of our policies. Where relevant, we will use our initial analyses as the basis of our consultation with protected groups.

Commissioning and procuring goods and services

5.52 The Commission procures a significant amount of goods and services. This includes such items as research services, training, IT hardware and software, print services and various other consumable items and services. As a publicly funded organisation, when dealing with suppliers or service providers the Commission must ensure value for money by making use of procurement processes that demonstrate competitiveness, transparency and fairness. In dealing with suppliers of these goods and services the Commission has a responsibility to spend money efficiently and can also use

these processes to further our equality and diversity aims. Suppliers and service providers working with the Commission, or those who intend to work with the Commission, must be able to comply with the requirements of current equality legislation.

5.53 We have conducted an equality impact assessment of our procurement function, which includes our strategy, procedures and guidance. We will use our procurement EIA action plan to continue to embed equality considerations into our procurement activities and ensure that relevant equality issues are taken into account when both commissioning new services and de-commissioning existing services.

5.54 So as to comply with procurement law and meet our equality obligations, we will give due regard to equality considerations in relation to all protected groups when undertaking procurement processes.

5.55 All organisations that tender for business are required to complete an equality and diversity monitoring form and demonstrate how they comply with equality legislation. Suppliers and service providers are also required to demonstrate how they will ensure that the goods or services they provide are accessible and meet the needs of our diverse stakeholders.

5.56 When we competitively tender for goods and services we will ensure that the Commission is accessible to a variety of suppliers. We will also ensure that the goods and services we purchase meet the needs of all our stakeholders and do not have any adverse impact on any group.

5.57 Where relevant and proportionate, we will set out what equality outcomes we require contractors to achieve and we will follow best practice in this area. We will provide procurement support and training for staff and will monitor the outcomes of our training arrangements. We will also publish information about our legal compliance in relation to services we procure or contract out.

Business planning, monitoring and reporting progress on this scheme

5.58 We will ensure that in our business and planning processes we give due regard to the need to achieve the equality aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty, section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act and our Welsh language duties when carrying out our functions.

5.59 As a matter of good practice we will integrate these duties into all of our business-planning processes (including budgeting and resource allocation).

5.60 In this scheme we set out our objectives, the actions we will take to achieve them, and the means by which actions will be measured. Moving forward, we will continue to do so at least every four years. We will present this information in a widely accessible format.

5.61 We will also publish information on our compliance with our equality duties annually; this will include information on our progress delivering our equality priorities set out in section 3 of this scheme.

5.62 We will provide clear leadership from senior management to ensure that we meet our duties and we will continue to provide guidance, training and support to ensure that all staff are aware of their equality obligations and how to meet them.

5.63 In view of our wider role in ensuring integrity and public confidence in the UK's democratic process, we will give due regard to the aims of the equality legislation that applies, as our work has high relevance to equality and good relations.

5.64 We will continue to update our equality scheme action plan as our priorities are revised and outcomes progressed. We will gather and monitor data to fill gaps in the evidence we use and assess the impact of our policies on stakeholders, staff and other groups and individuals with whom we engage.

Publication of equality information

5.65 We will publish the results of our EIAs, consultations, engagement activities and progress reports, and will ensure that this information is available in a range of formats. It will be published on our website here: <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/about-us/equality-and-diversity>

Further information on our consultation arrangements for Northern Ireland is set out in appendix A of this scheme.

Accountability

5.66 The Commission's Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring that we deliver this scheme. The measures set out in the action plan have been allocated to directors across the organisation who are responsible for ensuring that they are implemented. Our equality and diversity group will co-ordinate and monitor progress, reporting regularly to the Commission's Management Team and producing annual equality and diversity progress reports to the Executive Team.

Publication of the Commission's Single Equality Scheme: progress reports

5.67 Once approved, this scheme will be available on our website and will be reviewed annually. We will publish progress reports on our website after each annual review.

5.68 For translations and accessible formats of this scheme please contact the Electoral Commission:

Tel: 020 7271 0500

Textphone: 18001 020 7271 0500

Email: publications@electoralcommission.org.uk

Timetable for implementing this scheme

5.69 This scheme is aligned to our corporate planning cycle.

5.70 Our equality objectives are shaped by our functions and our over-arching principles and objectives. The evidence upon which they are based indicates that we will need to work to meet them beyond the duration of this scheme. We have set out clearly our schedule for review and will consider revising our equality objectives to reflect changing priorities or new evidence of inequalities.

5.71 In our Equality Scheme Action Plan, included in Appendix B, we have set out a time frame for each action. These actions support our equality objectives set out in section 3 of this scheme.

5.72 Our EIA schedule is set out in Appendix D

5.73 Our training arrangements are in place and will continue for the duration of this scheme. They are aligned with our corporate learning and development plan and will be developed in line with emerging good practice

6 Our action plan

Equality scheme action plan

6.1 Our action plan provides a framework to support the delivery of our scheme and allows us to measure our progress. We will use our action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. We look forward to providing an annual report on our progress and achievements.

6.2 Some points to note about the action plan:

- It is aligned to our corporate planning cycle.
- The action plan is relevant to our functions and in order to embed our equality and diversity activities across the organisation, it has been designed in a format to fit with the objectives set out in our corporate plan.
- It is a working document and we will monitor our progress on delivery of our action measures and develop the action plan as necessary to ensure it remains effective and relevant to our functions and work.

6.3 The action measures are specific, measureable, linked to achievable outcomes, realistic and time bound. They include performance indicators and timescales for their achievement. We will develop and prioritise these actions on the basis of evidence of inequalities and will continue to gather and analyse information across all protected groups to identify the inequalities that exist for our service users and those affected by our policies.

6.4 Each Commission directorate has a representative on the Commission's equality and diversity group who is responsible for monitoring the progress of their directorate's action plan activities.

6.5 Progress against the action plan will be reviewed regularly and reported to our Management and Executive Teams at least annually. We will publish summaries of our equality progress reports.

6.6 An updated copy of our equality scheme action plan is attached at Appendix B. Future updates and amendments will be available on our website at: <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/about-us/equality-and-diversity>.

6.7 For translations and accessible formats of the action plan please contact the Electoral Commission:

Tel: 020 7271 0500

Textphone: 18001 020 7271 0500

Email: publications@electoralcommission.org.uk

6.8 We are required by law to inform the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland of any amendments to our action plan and our arrangements for doing so are set out in Appendix A. Where actions do not apply to Northern Ireland this is stated in the action plan.

Assessing functions and policies for relevance to equality

6.9 We have identified the policy areas and functions across the organisation where equality and diversity are relevant, as well as the extent of their relevance. This has enabled us to prioritise and focus on issues in a planned and proportionate way to meet our statutory obligations.

6.10 An EIA schedule of our relevant functions and policies is attached at Appendix D. In taking forward our work to promote equality through the Electoral Commission's policies and practices, we will continue to revise this schedule in the same way, assigning low, medium or high priority for assessment.

7 How to give us feedback on this scheme

7.1 We welcome feedback on our equality scheme. If you have any comments, please contact us at ses@electoralcommission.org.uk or in writing to:

Public Information Team
The Electoral Commission
3 Bunhill Row
London EC1Y 8YZ

We prefer to receive comments in writing but if you require an alternative way to contact us please call: 020 7271 0592 or textphone: 18001 020 7271 0500

Complaints

7.2 Complaints can be made to the Commission in writing or by email. If you are unable to contact us in writing, we can accommodate your access needs. Please call us on:

- 020 7271 0500 or
- textphone: 18001 020 7271 0500
- or ask somebody to contact us on your behalf to request an alternative way to communicate with you

7.3 You will be required to give your name and address; anonymous complaints will be kept on file but they will not be investigated.

7.4 You should set out the circumstances and the nature of your complaint. For your assistance we can provide a form which sets out the information we need in order to investigate your complaint properly. However you are not obliged to use it.

7.5 Please direct all your complaints to the Secretary to the Commission Board, who will liaise with the Director/Head of the section or department you are making the complaint about. The Secretary to the Commission Board will then coordinate any responses to the complaint and will write to you after the matter has been investigated. Contact details:

Secretary to the Commission Board
The Electoral Commission
3 Bunhill Row
London EC1Y 8YZ
Email: kzonena@electoralcommission.org.uk

Complaints about the operation of this scheme in Northern Ireland are set out on page 30.

Appendix A

1 Our arrangements for compliance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998

Introduction

1.1 The Electoral Commission is a public body that operates across the United Kingdom and this is reflected in our decision to develop this Single Equalities Scheme that covers our equality commitments for the whole of the UK. In carrying out our functions relating to Northern Ireland, we must comply with section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act. We must have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- between people of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- between men and women generally
- between people with a disability and people without, and
- between people with dependants and people without

We must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group

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

1.3 In Northern Ireland, this is a statutory scheme, approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

1.4 We will commit the necessary resources in terms of people, time and money to make sure that we comply with the Section 75 statutory duties and we will report annually to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on our delivery of this scheme and our equalities progress in Northern Ireland.

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

1.6 In Section 1 of this scheme we set out details about the Electoral Commission. Section 2 sets out how equality law applies to our work. In sections 3 to 5 of this scheme we set out our equality commitments and how we plan to meet them. We also set out to promote equality and diversity as an employer and through our work on effective regulation of party and election finance and setting standards for well-run elections and electoral registration.

1.7 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires us to give more detailed information on our arrangements for complying with our equality duties in Northern Ireland, so we have outlined how we will do this here³.

Arrangements for assessing compliance⁴

1.8 Our general arrangements for assessing compliance with our statutory duties are set out in section 5 of this scheme. Here we also set out additional information about compliance assessment in respect of our duties in Northern Ireland.

1.9 By delegated authority, overall responsibility for the Commission's single equality scheme rests with our Chief Executive. Operational responsibility for the day to day implementation of this scheme in respect of Northern Ireland rests with:

Head of Office, Northern Ireland
Seatem House
28-32 Alfred Street
Belfast BT2 8EN

Tel: 028 9089 4021
Text via typetalk: 18001 028 9089 4021
Fax: 028 9089 4026
Email smagee@electoralcommission.org.uk

³ Schedule 9

⁴ Schedule 9 paragraph 4(2) (a)

1.10 Maintenance, implementation and review of our Single Equality Scheme is the responsibility of staff in the London Office:

Equality and Diversity
The Electoral Commission
3 Bunhill Row
London EC1Y 8YZ
Email: ses@electoralcommission.org.uk

Review of progress

1.11 The Electoral Commission will prepare an annual review of the progress we have made on implementing the arrangements set out in this scheme and how we meet our Section 75 statutory duties. We will send this annual report of our progress to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland by 31 August each year and will be mindful of any guidance on annual reporting issued by the Equality Commission. We will publish progress reports on our website after each annual review.

1.12 We will also inform the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland of any amendments to our Equality Scheme Action Plan set out in appendix B. We have set out in section 6 on page 25 how we intend to review the action plan. We will involve others in developing it and in the way we assess our compliance with the Section 75 duties through the actions contained in the plan.

1.13 We will liaise closely with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland to ensure that progress on the implementation of this equality scheme is maintained.

Publication of the Single Equality Scheme

1.14 This scheme will be made available in a range of accessible formats. We will directly consult and inform our equality consultees and stakeholders through e-mail, letter and the internet.

Complaints process⁵

1.15 If anyone believes that they have been directly affected by a failure of the Electoral Commission to comply with our approved equality scheme in relation to our equality duties in Northern Ireland, please complain to the Head

⁵ Schedule 9 paragraph 10

of Office, Northern Ireland (contact details on page 29). We will acknowledge receipt of each complaint within 20 days and will carry out an internal investigation of the complaint. If the complaint has not been resolved within a reasonable timescale, we will advise the complainant that the complaint can be brought to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland⁶.

1.16 The Electoral Commission will co-operate fully with any investigation by the Equality Commission and will provide access in a timely manner to any relevant documentation that the Commission may require⁷.

Our arrangements for consulting⁸

1.17 The Commission recognises the importance of consultation in all aspects of its work and specifically in the implementation of our statutory equality duties. We will consult on our equality scheme, action measures, equality impact assessments and other matters relevant to our equality duties and specifically to the Section 75 statutory duties.

1.18 We will seek the views of those directly affected by the matter/policy. In Northern Ireland this may include the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, representative groups of Section 75 categories, voluntary and community groups, and other groups who have a legitimate interest in the matter as appropriate.

1.19 We will carry out consultation in Northern Ireland in accordance with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland guidance 'Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A guide for public authorities (April 2010)'.

1.20 We will notify all consultees initially by email or post of the matter/policy being consulted and thereafter, to ensure the most effective use of our and our consultees resources, we will take a targeted approach to consultation for those consultees that may have a particular interest in the matter/policy being consulted upon and to whom the matter/policy is of particular relevance.

1.21 We will ensure that consultation with all stakeholders will begin as early as possible and will engage with affected individuals and representative groups to identify how best to consult with them.

⁶ Schedule 9 paragraph 10

⁷ Schedule 9 paragraph 11 (1) (b)

⁸ Schedule 9 paragraph 4 (2) (a) & (b)

1.22 We will ensure that consultation is accessible and agree appropriate timescales for each consultation event in accordance with the Section 75 guidance and express a continuing interest in receiving feedback from stakeholders.

1.23 We will consider the accessibility and format of every method of consultation we use in order to remove barriers to the consultation process. Specific consideration will be given as to how best to communicate with the various stakeholder groups. We will take account of existing and developing good practice.

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

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

1.26 We reserve that there may be circumstances where relevant policies must be introduced prior to consultation and we will ensure that in these circumstances we will proactively seek to gather stakeholder feedback on policy outcomes and monitor the on-going impact of our policies.

1.27 We will provide feedback to consultees in a timely manner. Feedback will include summary information on the policy consulted upon, a summary of consultees' comments and a summary of our consideration of and response to consultees' input. The feedback will be provided in formats suitable to consultees. The Commission has set up an internal equality and diversity group. The aim of this group is: to support the Commission in meeting the needs of all our stakeholders by promoting equality and diversity in the delivery of our services, by maintaining a diverse and inclusive workforce, and through the procurement of goods and services.

1.28 The group is comprised of senior representatives from each directorate across the Commission and leads consultation on our EIAs. It meets quarterly to monitor equality progress at the Commission and provides regular reports to the Management Team on the outcomes of its work.

1.29 We have included a list of our consultees at the end of this appendix and it is available on our website. Our consultation list is not exhaustive and will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it remains relevant to our functions and policies.

Review of the Single Equality Scheme⁹

1.30 We will formally review this scheme within five years of submitting it to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. We will take account of any guidance issued by the Equality Commission in carrying out the review. The review will include an evaluation of how effective we have been in implementing our scheme and statutory duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act and the Equality Act 2010. A report of this review will be made public on our website and sent to the Equality Commission.

Our arrangements for assessing, monitoring and publishing the impact of policies¹⁰

1.31 In terms of our equality duties ‘policy’ is broadly defined and covers all the ways in which we carry out or propose to carry out our functions this includes any strategy, plan, function, project, service, event or review. The term policy is also used for any proposed, amended or existing strategy, policy initiative or practice and/or decision, whether written or unwritten and irrespective of the label given to it, eg, ‘draft’, ‘pilot’. A list of our policies and functions is attached at Appendix D.

1.32 When we make policy decisions, we will take into account any assessment and consultation that had been carried out in relation to the policy¹¹.

1.33 We use evidence based screening and equality impact assessments to analyse the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. In carrying out these assessments we will relate them to the intended outcomes of the policy in question and will continue to engage with the Equality Commission to ensure best practice.

1.34 Our two-stage Equality Impact Assessment ‘toolkit’ serves to screen our policies in the first stage and provides guidance and forms for completing full EIAs. Information about our EIA toolkit is set out in more detail on page 15 and is our equivalent to the screening and EQIA procedures set out in the Section 75 guidance. We will continue to engage with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland to ensure that it is a true equivalent.

1.35 Screening enables us to identify those policies that are likely to have an impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations. Screening is

⁹ Schedule 9 paragraph 8 (3)

¹⁰ Schedule 9 paragraph 4 (2) (b)

¹¹ Schedule 9 paragraph 9 (2)

completed at the earliest opportunity in the policy development and review process. Details about how we use our equality impact assessment toolkit to screen our policies for potential negative impacts is set out in section 5 on page 15.

1.36 We gather all relevant information and data, both qualitative and quantitative to inform our screening decisions and take it into account as we consider the needs, experiences and priorities of all Section 75 equality categories.

1.37 The lead officer responsible for putting together the policy will take the lead role in screening that policy. Screening will also involve other relevant team members, for example, our senior equality adviser, those who implement the policy and staff members from other relevant work areas. Where appropriate we will include key stakeholders in the screening process.

1.38 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is 'medium' or 'low' in respect of one, or more, of the equality of opportunity and or good relations categories we will consider measures that might mitigate the policy impact as well as alternative policies that might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

1.39 Where we mitigate we will outline in our screening template the reasons to support this decision together with the proposed changes, amendments or alternative policy. This screening decision will be 'signed off' by the appropriate policy lead within the Electoral Commission.

1.40 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is 'high' in respect of one, or more, of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we will normally subject the policy to a full equality impact assessment (Stage 2). Our decision will be 'signed off' by the appropriate policy lead within the Electoral Commission.

1.41 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is 'none', in respect of all of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we may decide to set aside the policy from the EIA process – known as 'screening the policy out'. If a policy is 'screened out' as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, we will give details of the reasons for the decision taken. This screening decision will be 'signed off' by the appropriate policy lead within the Electoral Commission.

1.42 Once it has been identified that an equality impact assessment is necessary, we will carry out the equality impact assessment in accordance with Equality Commission guidance, using our equivalent procedures, set out on p15 of this scheme. Any equality impact assessment will be subject to consultation at the appropriate stage. We will allow sufficient time for effective consultation and observe the timescales set out in the Equality Commission

for Northern Ireland's Guide to the Statutory Duties.. We will make publicly available the results of the assessments¹² of the likely impact of our policies on promoting equality of opportunity and be proactive in announcing publication.

1.43 Screening reports set out the policy, its purpose and the potential impact of the policy on each protected group; the evidence used to inform the screening, actions to mitigate low and medium impacts and the Action plan to implement measures to promote equality through the policy. Full stage EIAs are summarised to include:

- A list of all policies screened (including those screened out as having no relevance) over the 6 months period
 - the purpose of the policy
 - Its relevance to equality
 - data that has informed the assessment
 - details of consultation undertaken
 - a summary and analysis of findings
 - opportunities to promote equality
 - adjustments to the policy and associated risks
 - measures to implement the policy and the action plan which sets out measurable actions to ensure the findings of the assessment and built into to policy and that it is monitored and reviewed within appropriate time-scales.
- A link to completed screening templates for each policy on our website

1.44 The results of our screening reports and assessments can be found on our website at <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/about-us/equality-and-diversity> and are available in alternative formats on request. We will be proactive in announcing the outcomes of our assessments (which will be in six monthly updates on our website) by contacting consultees in Northern Ireland when these are published.

1.45 If a consultee, including the Equality Commission, raises a concern about a screening decision based on supporting evidence, we will review the screening decision. We will publish our screening reports quarterly on our website and inform consultees.

1.46 Monitoring¹³ can help us to deliver better public services and continuous improvements. Monitoring equality information involves the processing of

¹² Schedule 9 paragraph 4 (2) (d); Schedule 9 paragraph 9. (1)

¹³ Schedule 9 paragraph 4 (2) (c)

sensitive personal data (data relating to the racial or ethnic origin of individuals, sexual orientation, political opinion, religious belief, etc). To ensure that we monitor information confidentially and effectively we will follow guidance from the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Equality Commission.

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

1.48 The systems we have established to monitor the impact of policies and identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations are:

- collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an on-going basis
- a review of information and data collected within one year of approval of this equality scheme, to identify the extent of current monitoring and take action to address any gaps in order to have the necessary information on which to base decisions
- collecting new data if necessary.

1.49 We will revise a policy if over a two year period of monitoring, evaluation shows a greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted and ensure better outcomes for relevant equality groups.

1.50 We review our equality impact assessment monitoring information on an annual basis. Other monitoring information is reviewed on an on-going basis

1.51 We will publish the results of our monitoring¹⁴ of adverse impacts of policies we have adopted in a timely manner and welcome feedback to further inform our policy development. We will be proactive in announcing the outcomes of our monitoring (which will be in six monthly updates on our website) by contacting consultees in Northern Ireland when these are published.

¹⁴ Schedule 9 paragraph 4 (2) (d)

Arrangements for staff training¹⁵

1.52 The Commission recognises the value of training in enabling us be fully aware of and to effectively implement our equality duties. We have developed an equality and diversity training programme for all staff at the Commission. Our training arrangements including objectives and monitoring and evaluation arrangements are included in full in section 4.

1.53 The extent to which training arrangements have been met will be reported on as part of the Section 75 annual progress report, which will be sent to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services we provide¹⁶

1.54 The Commission is committed to ensuring that the information and services we provide are fully accessible to all of our stakeholders across the UK. We keep our arrangements under review to ensure that it remains accessible.

1.55 Assessing public access to information and services (see also Paragraphs 5.28 and 5.29 for accessibility to elections and of election reports): We monitor annually across all our functions, in relation to access to information and services, to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted. We know that not all groups have the same access to information as others in particular:

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

1.56 We provide information in alternative formats on request, where it is reasonable to do so, to ensure equality of opportunity in accessing information. If we cannot fully meet a request, we will liaise with the service

¹⁵ Schedule 9 paragraph 4 (2) (e)

¹⁶ Schedule 9 4 (2) (f)

user to identify a reasonable alternative. We will provide an initial response to requests for information in alternative formats within five working days.

1.57 We are committed to ensuring that all of our services are fully accessible to customers and stakeholders. We monitor access to our information and services annually in all our work to ensure we promote equality of opportunity and good relations. We make access recommendations and work with others to remove barriers as part of our work to ensure that everyone who is eligible is able to participate in the democratic process.

1.58 We have various arrangements in place to ensure access to our information and services. To discuss access to our services, or for information on obtaining our publications in alternative formats, such as another language or in a large-print or Braille, please contact the Electoral Commission:

Tel: 020 7271 0500

Textphone: 18001 020 7271 0500

Email: publications@electoralcommission.org.uk More detail on the accessibility of our information is contained in our equality scheme.

Timetable for measures proposed¹⁷

	Measure	Responsibility	Timescale
	Prepare and consult on the scheme in accordance with guidance from the Equality Commission NI	Project Officer/ Senior Equality and Diversity Officer	From 09/02/21 to 05/03/12
	Submit to Equality Commission	Project Officer	1 May 2012
	Section 75 Annual Progress Report	Project Officer / Senior Equality and Diversity Officer	31 August (annually)
	Consultation list	Project Officer	January (annually)

¹⁷ Schedule 9 paragraph 4 (3) (b)

	reviewed and updates		
	Equality impact assessment timetable and monitoring	Senior Equality and Diversity Officer	Quarterly and on-going
	Screening timetable	Senior Equality and Diversity Officer	Yearly review of all policies with high relevance and new policies to be screened at earliest opportunity to inform formulation
	EIA (EQIA) timetable	Senior Equality and Diversity Officer	Schedule set out in appendix D Schedule revised yearly
	Screening reports	Senior Equality and Diversity Officer	To be published bi-annually and notification sent to consultees.
	Training	HR and Senior Equality and Diversity Officer	Yearly reviews, in line with Equality Scheme Action Plan reviews
	Assessing access to information and services	Senior Equality and Diversity Officer and Departments	On-going and annual progress report
	Communication of equality scheme	Project Officer/ Senior Equality and Diversity Officer	On-going
	Review of equality scheme	Project Officer/ Senior Equality and Diversity Officer	Within 5 years
	Review of Equality Scheme Action Plan	Project Officer/ Senior Equality and Diversity Officer	Yearly
	Review and publication of monitoring information	Project Officer/ Senior Equality and Diversity Officer	At least yearly in annual progress report

List of consultees

- Action on Hearing Loss
- An Munia Tober
- Age NI
- Belfast Butterfly Club
- Belfast Islamic Centre
- Belfast Jewish Community
- Bishop of Down and Connor/Catholic Church
- British Deaf Association NI
- Carers NI
- Childcare Northern Ireland
- Children law Centre
- Chinese Welfare Association
- Church of Ireland
- Coalition on Sexual Orientation
- Committee on the Administration of Justice
- Community Relations Council
- Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
- Department of Education
- Department of Employment & Learning
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
- Department of the Environment
- Department of Finance and Personnel
- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
- Department of Justice
- Department for Regional Development
- Department for Social Development
- Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister
- Disability Action
- East Belfast Community Development Agency
- Employers for Disability NI
- Electoral Office for Northern Ireland
- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
- First Division Association
- Gingerbread NI
- Indian Community Centre
- MENCAP
- Methodist Church
- Multi-Cultural Resource Centre
- NI Anti-Poverty Network
- NI Association for Mental Health
- NI Committee, Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- NI Council for Ethnic Minorities
- NI Council for Voluntary Action
- NI Gay Rights Association

- NI Human Rights Commission
- NI Womens Aid Federation
- NI Women's European Platform
- Northern Ireland Office
- Office of the Commissioner for Children & Young People
- Presbyterian Church
- Rainbow Project
- Relate NI
- RNIB NI
- Training for Women Network
- Womens Forum NI
- Womens Support Network

Political parties

- Alliance Party of Northern Ireland
- British National Party
- Community Partnership NI
- Conservative & Unionist Party
- Democratic Unionist Party
- eirígí
- Fianna Fáil – The Republican Party
- Give our Children a Future Party
- Green Party
- Independent Republican Party
- Irish Republican Socialist Party
- Labour Party of NI
- People Before Profit Alliance
- Procapitalism
- Progressive Unionist Party of Northern Ireland
- SDLP (Social Democratic & Labour Party)
- Sinn Féin
- Socialist Party NI
- The Workers Party
- Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV)
- UK Independence Party (UKIP)
- Ulster Unionist Party
- Ulster Unionist Coalition

This consultee list is not exhaustive and will be reviewed annually to ensure its relevance

Appendix B

Equality scheme action plan – updated April 2014

This action plan sets out equality related activities taking place across the Commission. It was started in 2010. It is reviewed annually and will be developed throughout the period of our equality scheme. Updates are provided for existing actions and new ones are included to ensure that this plan reflects accurately how we promote equality in electoral participation and regulation of party political finance. We also review the success measures to ensure that they tell us as clearly as possible how we are progressing.

Table B1: Party and Election Finance directorate

Actions	Timeframe	Success measures	Responsibility
B1:1 (Revised action): To review at intervals our written guidance and other information beyond written guidance about the regulatory system and revise as necessary to ensure it is user friendly and aims to meet best practice in terms of accessibility	Ongoing – annually/linked to electoral events	All guidance and information about the regulatory system reviewed and updated where appropriate	Director of Party and Election Finance
<p>Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During 2013-14 guidance developed, reviewed or updated for the EU Parliamentary elections and local elections in May 2014, Independence Referendum in September 2014 and UK Parliamentary election • New approach adopted in January 2012, to deliver complex information in a format that has the widest access. • Mapping exercise undertaken in November 2012 has set out a process for production of guidance that includes steps to consider equality. 			
B1:2 Continue to raise awareness among different groups about the regulatory system	Election-specific timeframes	Continued improvement in adherence to the regulatory system	Director of Party and Election Finance
<p>Update: As part of developing guidance we regularly provide updates and information different groups</p>			
B1:3 Ensure decisions on applications to register political parties are transparent and fair	Continuous - statutory function	Demonstrable audit trail of decision process including transparent reasons for rejection	Director of Party and Election Finance

Actions	Timeframe	Success measures	Responsibility
<p>B1:4 (Revised action): Ensure equality is promoted through the Commission’s Quality Management System (QMS), which details the procedures to be followed by staff in handling party and election finance matters by conducting EIAs to identify potential to develop best practice and learn from any instances of problems and feed these back to QMS</p>	<p>July 2013 Relevant QMS have been identified</p>	<p>a) Key QMS measures that represent higher risk in equalities terms will be identified</p> <p>b) Key QMS measures identified will be equality impact assessed and actions arising to be implemented (i.e. QMS to be revised where potential is found to further promote equality through QMS)</p>	<p>Director of Party and Election Finance</p>
<p>Update: We are developing our processes so that impact and relevance from an equality perspective is considered as part of our standard review of QMS procedures. This work will now be undertaken during 2014. Relevant procedures will then be impact assessed.</p>			

Table B2: Electoral Administration directorate

Update: An EIA of our electoral administration functions has been carried out.

Actions	Timeframe	Success measures	Responsibility
B2:1 Ensure that guidance produced is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure compliance with equalities legislation (Does not apply to Northern Ireland)	after each electoral event	Guidance reflects current legislation	Director of Electoral Administration (This action does not apply to Northern Ireland)
Update: Returning Officer and candidates and agents guidance and accompanying resources for local government elections have been reviewed and revised where necessary in preparation for the May 2014 elections. The legal team review and advise on any changes or additions to the guidance to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation.			
B2:2 Ensure the guidance produced is regularly reviewed and incorporates equality recommendations from the reporting on elections.	after each electoral event	Guidance is updated accordingly at suitable intervals and acted on by Returning Officers (ROs) and Electoral Registration Officers (EROs)	Director of Electoral Administration (This action does not apply to Northern Ireland)
Update: No specific issues arose at the May 2013 elections relating to our functions in relation to equality or accessibility and so no updates to existing guidance required.			
B2:3 Assess performance standards for EROs and ROs to ensure equality issues are addressed in evidence gathering for the final reports	after each electoral event	RO performance set out in statutory election reports, published on Commission website	Director of Electoral Administration
Update: Following each scheduled election the Commission reports on returning officer performance in its statutory election reports, and publishes its assessment of RO performance on its website.			
B2:4 Gather demographic information to better inform the Commission about groups at risk of under-registration	This work is on-going,	Production of regular reports on completeness and accuracy of electoral registers with reliable findings.	Director of Electoral Administration
Update: Our most recent report on completeness is for Northern Ireland and was published in 2012			

Actions	Timeframe	Success measures	Responsibility
B2:5 Ensure all research projects are inclusive	To coincide with research proposals	Full EIA or screening undertaken for each relevant research proposal	Director of Electoral Administration
Update: EIAs have been undertaken on all research proposals where appropriate.			

Table B3: Communications directorate

Actions	Timeframe	Success measures	Responsibility
B3:1 Continue to develop targeted media relations work to communicate our messages to specific under-represented groups, including BME, people with disabilities and age-specific groups (e.g. young people)	Election specific	Our messages feature in the targeted media in response to our campaigns	Director of Communications
Update: This work is ongoing, most recent campaign is the one for the European Parliamentary and local elections in May 2014			
B3:2 Ensure accessible and inclusive public awareness campaigns by evaluating the responses of specific groups	Election specific	Good levels of response from specific groups	Director of Communications
Update: Tracking research studies are underway for the European Parliamentary and local elections in May 2014 and plans are being developed for the studies for the IER campaign and the campaign to support the Independence Referendum in Scotland			
B3:3 Develop campaign strategies to target communities at risk of non-registration following any updates to current demographic information	Election-specific timescales	Demographics used for basis of campaign reflect most recent information	Director of Communications
Update 2013: Key equality requirements incorporated into contracts for campaigns at point of procurement. Our campaign for the transition to IER has focussed on under-registered groups			
B3:4 Ensure the About My Vote website continues to provide information in a range of languages and is accessible	Ongoing	Included in usability testing programme Yearly review of languages viewed	Director of Communications

Actions	Timeframe	Success measures	Responsibility
Update: Online registration forms available in Welsh and English, forms have been recently reviewed in relation to key languages used. Redevelopment of the About my Vote site is planned for 2014-15			
B3:5 Continue to ensure our publications and websites are accessible	Ongoing	Regular usability testing of a) Corporate website b) Our publications Leading to adjustments where required	Director of Communications
Update: Our re-developed corporate website was launched in September 2014, usability testing was undertaken as part of the development and the site. Our pages conform at a minimum to Level AA compliance as specified by the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. Wherever possible, AAA requirements are also met.			
B3:6 Ensure the Welsh element of the corporate website and publications are compliant and provide updates/amends as necessary	Ongoing	Meet the objectives relating to the Commission's corporate website and publications as set out in our statutory Welsh Language Scheme.	Director of Communications (this action does not apply to Northern Ireland)
Update: New website launched in September 2014 - work is continuing to finalise content in Welsh, but the majority is now done.			
B3:7 Ensure the alternative format policy is reviewed and amended where necessary	Review due To be undertaken in Summer 2014 (was July 2013)	policy reviewed and amended to schedule	Director of Communications
Update: Alternative Formats impact assessment in currently underway and will be completed Summer 2014			

Table B4: Finance and Corporate Services directorate

Actions	Timeframe	Success measures	Responsibility
B4.2 Assess the relevance of Commission policies and functions	Relates to schedule set out in the scheme	The Commission is able to give due regard to policies most relevant for equality	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Update: Commission policies and functions are prioritised for assessment. Majority of high priority policies completed by April 2013			
B4.3 Collate and publish annual information on compliance with the general equality duty and Section 75, including equality information, and progress with objectives	Annually from April 2012	Equality information and progress reports identify areas where action is required and where improved equality outcomes for the public and Commission staff are achieved	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Update: latest progress report published on website. Annual review and update of the Equality Scheme has been completed (April 2014)			
B4.4 Revise the Commission's guidance for assessing and analysing the impact of policies on all protected groups	Review undertaken July 2012. Revisions to EIA toolkit to be made 2013-14	The Commission is better able to assess the impact of policies and set equality objectives	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Update: The Commission's EIA guidance has been revised and is currently in use. Development continues and the guidance includes a form for user feedback			
B4.5 Ensure all new and existing policies, procedures and practices are impact assessed; ensure working practices are adjusted to respond to any adverse impact identified	Ongoing	Assessments are mainstreamed in decision making	Director of Finance and Corporate Services

Actions	Timeframe	Success measures	Responsibility
Update: EIAs completed/underway as set out in the schedule. Delivery of action plans complete/underway.			
B4.6 Set objectives based on the analysis of equality information and the outcome of engagement activities and assessments of the impact of Commission policies on the public, staff and other stakeholders	April 2014, to be reviewed annually and revised by April 2016	Revised objectives better meet the needs of the public and staff	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Update: Objectives reviewed following progress reporting process. Delivery of EIA action plans underway, in line with function schedule			
B4.7 Review procurement guidance to ensure equality is considered in relation to all groups when procuring and commissioning goods and services	Completed in March 2014 – next review March 2016	Procurement processes support the delivery of the aims of the equality duty	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
B4.8 Ensure all tender documents require suppliers to demonstrate how their goods or services are accessible for all groups	Completed in January 2012 and ongoing (reviewed in March 2014)	Providers of goods and services provide relevant information	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
B4.9 Put in place procedures to ensure all suppliers are required to demonstrate their commitment to the equality duty	Completed January 2012 and ongoing (reviewed in March 2014)	Suppliers provide relevant information	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
B4.10 Publish details of contracts awarded on the internet	Ongoing as contracts are awarded	Details of awarded contracts are available on the internet	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Update 2013: Action plan arising from EIA of procurement function (conducted 2011-12) completed and reviewed/updated (Feb			

Actions	Timeframe	Success measures	Responsibility
2013). All policies, guidance, tender documents, and procedures have been updated and information about compliance with the Equality Duty is provided to suppliers. Suppliers are required to produce evidence of compliance with the Equality Act 2010. EIA screening is now included in the procurement procedure			
B4.11 Ensure that our facilities continue to comply with the legislation and ensure we are responsive to individuals' needs	Yearly audits	access/compliance issues highlighted in our annual H&S audits are addressed	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Update: H&S audits completed in 2013-14. Equality Impact assessment undertaken on the move to home working for staff in English regions			
B4.12 Review our HR strategy to ensure it meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and will ensure compliance with the new public sector equality duty	The HR strategy is developed in preparation for the start of each financial year	The HR strategy supports the delivery of the public sector equality duty and meets the requirements of the statutory codes of practice	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Update: The Commission's HR Strategy 2014-15 has been approved.			
B4.13 ensure that requests for reasonable adjustments are implemented in partnership with the employee	Ongoing	implementation of reasonable adjustment requests are agreed by the employee	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Update: All requests made in 2013-14 have been approved and adjustments put in place.			
B4.14 Continue to recruit with the disability 'two ticks' framework and symbol	Ongoing	Increase in disabled people applying and being interviewed for positions	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Update: All recruitment exercises carried out in 2013-14 have used the 'two ticks' framework			
B4.15 Continue to ensure people are inclusive when short-listing and interviewing for positions	During recruitment/next annual review. Satisfactory review	our reviews show we are interviewing and employing a diverse range of people	Director of Finance and Corporate Services

Actions	Timeframe	Success measures	Responsibility
	completed July 2012 Next review July 2013		
Update: Following a review of our recruitment processes (and an EIA) we have made some changes to our procedures to promote inclusivity			
B4.16 Continue to monitor our staff profile and use the information to inform HR policies and practices	quarterly monitoring and HR EIAs in line with schedule	A representative workforce across the Commission	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Update: All high priority HR EIAs have been undertaken or reviewed. Monthly information on the Commission's establishment is reviewed by the Executive Team and annual staff demographics are reviewed by the Commission Board			
B4.17 Continue to develop our employees to ensure they are confident in embedding equalities in their work practices	Learning and Development plan reviewed each year Annual review of equality modules	Compliant with training requirements of the relevant legislation	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Update 2013: Compulsory equality e-learning module refresher completed by all staff, refresher training currently being agreed and will be rolled out to staff. Equal Opportunities Policy Statement in place and available on our website. Targeted EIA training has taken place to develop skills and knowledge of those involved in EIA process			
B4.18 Conduct an equal pay audit	2-yearly audits undertaken excepting periods of pay-freeze Next audit due May 2014	Revised and updated policy in place	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Update:			
B4.19 Develop an action plan to implement any findings of the	Where relevant after each audit	Finding of equal pay audit implemented	Director of Finance and Corporate Services

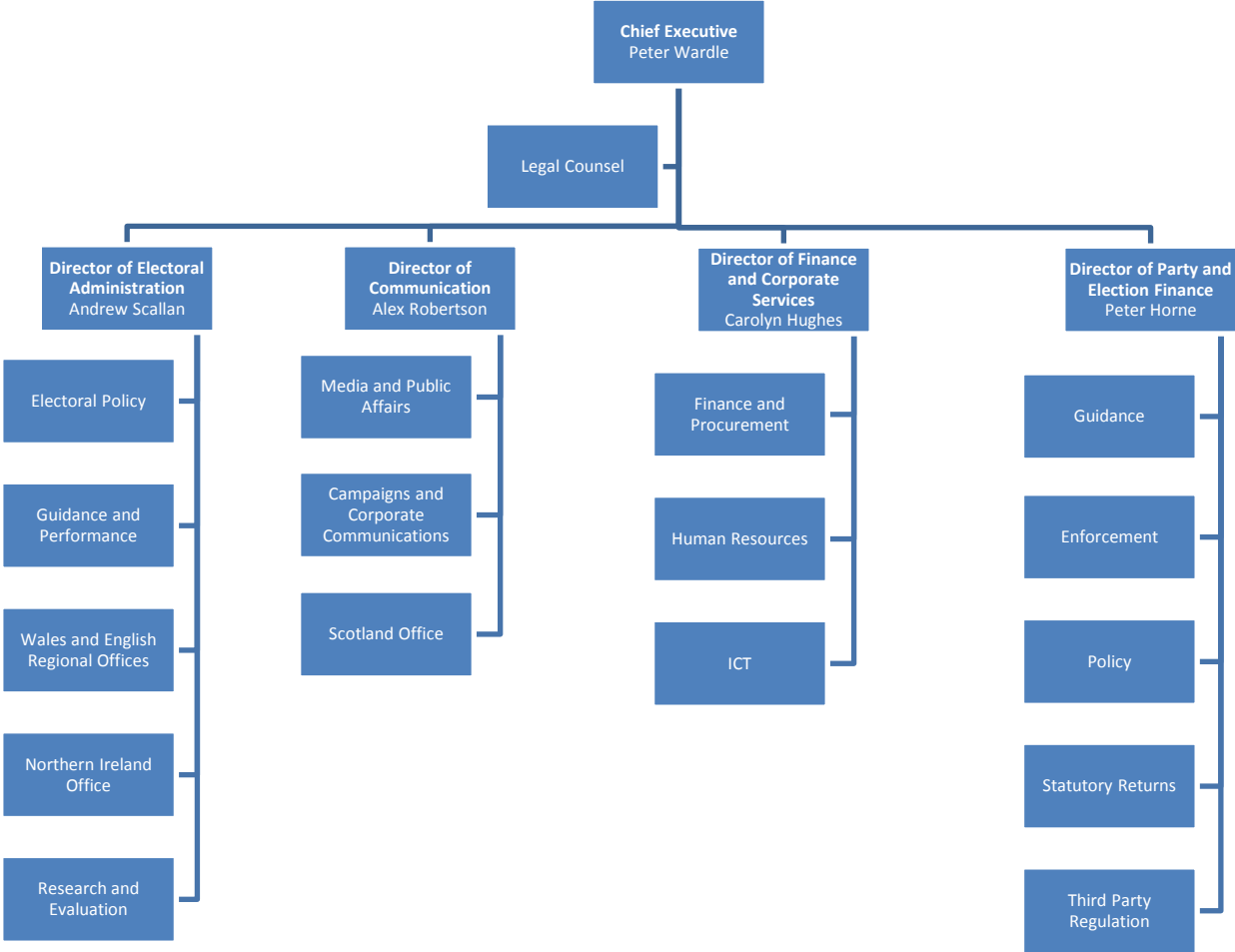
Actions	Timeframe	Success measures	Responsibility
equal pay audit			

Table B6: Other Projects

Actions	Timeframe	Success measures	Responsibility
B6:1 Ensuring forms designed for voter registration under IER are accessible (project 2.3)	December 2014	Forms designed for voter registration under IER are accessible	Head of Electoral Administration
Update: We developed different sets of designs for IER forms based on the statutory requirements set out in the draft legislation and carried out user testing through workshops with the public to identify whether there could be any significant barriers to electors successfully providing the information required. Following this we informed the Government of our recommended approach (a folded A3 format) and secured Government's support for this recommendation.			
B6:2 Targeting those groups least likely to register under IER as part of our IER public awareness activity by; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus group testing of campaign creative and messages • production of accessible public information materials • media buying that considers campaign audiences • partnership marketing 	Delivered by December 2015	Campaign evaluation research will be conducted throughout and beyond the project timeframe (December 2015) to evaluate the effectiveness of these activities	Head of Guidance and Performance

Actions	Timeframe	Success measures	Responsibility
targets that include under-registered groups			

Appendix C: Commission structure April 2014



Appendix D

Electoral Commission function and policy list

We are currently reviewing our EIA schedule. The information below will be updated by September 2014

Deputy Chief Executive

Department Function	Policy, strategy or procedure	Screening questionnaire: Need for a full impact assessment						
		Priority			Timescale			Review
		H	M	L	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	
Legal	Freedom of Information	H			1			2013 -14
Legal	Anti fraud and money laundering policy		M			2		2014 -15
Secretariat	Complaints procedure	H			1			2013 -14
Secretariat	Corporate governance		M			2		2014 -15
Research and Evaluation	Consultation guidance	H			1			2013 -14
Wales office	Welsh language scheme	H			1			2013 -14
Northern Ireland office	Northern Ireland equality scheme	H			1			2013 -14

Communication

Department Function	Policy, strategy or procedure	Screening Questionnaire: Need for a full impact assessment						
		Priority			Timescale			Review
		H	M	L	Yr1	Yr 2	Yr 3	
Corporate Communications	Commission websites	H			1			2013 -14
Corporate Communications	Alternative format policy		M			2		2014 -15
Internal Communications	Internal communication strategy	H			1			2013 -14
Campaigns and Public Information	Promoting understanding of electoral and political matters (undertaken equality impact assessment in 2007)	H				2		2013 -15
Campaigns and Public Information	Briefs submitted to agencies to initiate each campaign		M			2		2014 -15
Campaigns and Public Information	Public information line accessibility (both in-house service and external call centre support.	H			1			2013 -14
Public Affairs	Party political broadcasting policy		M			2		2014 -15
Public Affairs	International policy			L		2		2014 -15

Party and Election Finance

Department Function	Policy, strategy or procedure	Screening questionnaire: Need for a full impact assessment						
		Priority			Timescale			Review
		H	M	L	Yr1	Yr 2	Yr 3	
PEF Policy	Guidance manuals to parties, candidates etc.	H			1			2013 -14
PEF Policy	Registration of political parties		M			2		2014 -15
PEF Policy	Control of campaign expenditure			L			3	
PEF Policy	Provision of policy development grants to qualifying parties		M			2		2014- 15
PEF Policy	Accounting requirements for registered parties			L			3	
PEF Policy	Control of donations to registered parties and their members			L			3	
Enforcement	Civil penalties enforcement			L			3	
Enforcement	Forfeiture enforcement		M			2		2014 -15
Enforcement	Statement of account extension deadline			L			3	
Enforcement	Process for conducting an investigation and		M*			2		2013 -14
Assess together	Process to decide to investigate		M*			2		2013 -14

M* – Policies which were previously assigned high priority, re-assigned low to medium priority because they have a small range and little possibility of substantial impact. These processes are statutory so there is little flexibility to change them.

Finance and Corporate Services

Department Function	Policy, strategy or procedure	Screening questionnaire: Need for a full impact assessment						
		Priority			Timescale			Review
		H	M	L	Yr1	Yr 2	Yr 3	
Finance and accounting	Travel and subsistence		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Adoption leave		M			2		2014- 15
Human Resources	Annual leave		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Capability	H			1			2013 -14
Human Resources	Code of Conduct		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Dignity at work	H			1			2013 -14
Human Resources	Disciplinary	H			1			2013 -14
Human Resources	Disruption to travel			L			3	
Human Resources	Equal pay	H			1			2013 -14
Human Resources	Equal opportunities	H			1			2013 -14
Human Resources	Fixed term		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Flexible working		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Flexible working hours scheme		M			2		2014- 15
Human Resources	Grievance	H			1			2013 -14
Human Resources	Job evaluation		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Job security and redundancy		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Learning and development		M		1			2013 -14

Department Function	Policy, strategy or procedure	Screening questionnaire: Need for a full impact assessment						
		Priority			Timescale			Review
		H	M	L	Yr1	Yr 2	Yr 3	
Human Resources	Maternity	H			1			2013 -14
Human Resources	Out of hours			L			3	
Human Resources	Overtime			L			3	
Human Resources	Parental leave		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Paternity leave		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Personal performance management		M		1			2013 -14
Human Resources	Probation		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Recruitment and selection	H			1			2013 -14
Human Resources	Relocation			L			3	
Human Resources	Retirement		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Salary payment			L			3	
Human Resources	Secondment		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Sick pay and sick absence		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Smoking policy			L			3	
Human Resources	Special bonus		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Special leave and time off		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Suspension from work		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Temporary promotion and responsibility allowance		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Voucher scheme		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Whistle-blowing policy	H			1			2013 -14
Human Resources	Working from home		M			2		2014 -15
Human Resources	Work related stress	H			1			2013 -14

Department Function	Policy, strategy or procedure	Screening questionnaire: Need for a full impact assessment						
		Priority			Timescale			Review
		H	M	L	Yr1	Yr 2	Yr 3	
Support Services	Business continuity plan			L		2		2014 -15
Support Services	Property strategy			L			3	
IT support	IT strategy			L			3	
IT support	IT security policy			L			3	
IT support	Data protection policy		M			2		2014 -15
Records and information management	Archiving procedures			L			3	
Records and information management	Personal data		M			2		2014 -15
Procurement	Procurement strategy	H			1			2013 -14
Procurement	Procurement manual	H			1			2013 -14
Strategy and corporate planning	Corporate plan	H			1			2013 -14
Risk Management	Framework for managing risk		M			2		2014 - 5
Equality and Diversity	Equality scheme	H			1			2013 -14
Health and Safety	Health and safety policy	H			1			2013 -14
Health and Safety	Display screen equipment		M			2		2014 -15
Facilities	Fire notice – evacuation policy	H	M*		1			2014 -15
Facilities	First aid procedure	H	M*		1			2014 -15
Facilities	Environmental Policy			L			3	

M* EIAs have been carried out on these policies and negative impacts mitigated. Upon assessment they have been re-assigned medium priority and will therefore be reviewed in 2014- 15

Electoral Administration

Department Function	Policy, strategy or procedure	Screening questionnaire: Need for a full impact assessment						
		Priority			Timescale			Review
		H	M	L	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	
Electoral Administration –	Guidance manuals; guidance and support tools for administrators; enquiry service for administrators/candidates and agents; pre and post election seminars (Practice team, English Offices and offices in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland)		M			2		
Performance Standards	Performance standards framework for electoral registration and electoral administration	H			1		2013 -14	
Policy	Reporting on elections and referendums		M			2		
Policy	Review of electoral and registration law	H			1		2013 -14	
Policy	Responses to consultations: proposed legislation	H			1		2013 -14	

Glossary

AAA	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0 These guidelines set out how to make our website accessible to people with disabilities.
Adverse Impact	Where a group of people protected by equality law has been affected differently by a policy and the effect is less favourable, it is known as adverse impact.
BME	Black and minority ethnic
CEO	Chief Electoral Officer
Commission	The Electoral Commission
Consultation	Our equality consultation involves asking our stakeholders (i.e., service users, staff, the general public) for their views on how best to design policies that promote equality
Due regard	To properly consider the need to promote equality, taking into account our purpose and the need to spend public money effectively
EAA	Electoral Administration Act 2006
EIA	Equality impact assessment An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a tool to ensure we don't exclude anybody from accessing our services or those that we play a part in delivering. It's also a chance to explore ways to promote equality
EQIA	Equality impact assessment (used in Northern Ireland)
ERO	Electoral Registration Officer
Great Britain	England, Scotland and Wales
HR	Human resources
IER	Individual electoral registration
policy	The term policy covers all the ways in which an organisation carries out its functions
Protected Groups	Refers to the characteristics of people legally protected from discrimination

PPE Act	Political Parties and Elections Act 2009
PPERA	Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000
RCO	Referendum Counting Officer
RO	Returning Officer
Schedule 9	Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 sets out detailed provisions for the enforcement of the Section 75 statutory duties, including an outline of what should be included in an equality scheme.
Screening	The procedure for identifying which policies will be subject to equality impact assessment, and how these equality impact assessments will be prioritised.
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Definition of the characteristics of people protected from discrimination in the UK

Age: Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act guidance¹⁸ proposes that for most purposes, the main categories are: those under 18; people aged between 18 and 65; and people over 65. However, the definition of age groups will relate to the policy under consideration.

Disability: A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Gender reassignment: Refers to people transitioning from one gender to another.

Marriage and Civil Partnership: Under the Equality Act 2010 Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters. Also 'status' can refer to whether single, divorced or separated, married or in a civil partnership

¹⁸ Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1988. A Guide for Public Authorities April 2005 and April 2010

Marital status: under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act refers to 'Married people; unmarried people; divorced or separate people; widowed people' .
Pregnancy and maternity:

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after birth, and includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding

Race: Race refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

Religion: Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

Sexual Orientation refers to whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes

People with dependants: Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, Defines this group as: people with a primary responsibility for: a child; a person with a disability; a dependent elderly person.

Political opinion: Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1988, defines political opinion as: Unionists generally; Nationalists generally; members/supporters of any political party; other.

Language: In compliance with the Welsh Language Act 1993, this consideration refers to a group of people defined by the language they speak. In Wales we have a duty to provide services in Welsh and English. We also consider the needs of speakers of British Sign language (BSL) and people who do not speak English or Welsh.