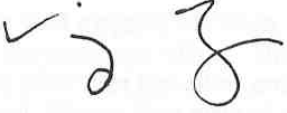


# The Electoral Commission

## Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report

### Contact:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Equality Scheme</li></ul>	Name: Julie Howell Telephone: Click or tap here to enter text. Email: JHowell@electoralcommission.org.uk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan</li></ul>	As above <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Name: Click or tap here to enter text. Telephone: Click or tap here to enter text. Email: Click or tap here to enter text.
Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:	<a href="#">Single Equalities Scheme for Northern Ireland</a> Click or tap here to enter text.
<b>Signature:</b> 	Vijay Rangarajan Chief Executive

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

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

**This report reflects progress made between April 2024 and March 2025**

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

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

- 1 In 2024-25, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

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

The Electoral Commission is an independent body set up by the UK Parliament. We regulate party and election finance and set standards for well-run elections. We work to support a healthy democracy, where elections and referendums are based on our principles of trust, participation, and no undue influence. The Commission prioritises Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) with three key strategic EDI objectives outlined below -

- Ensure that everyone who is eligible to participate in the democratic process can do so.
- Embed EDI in everything we do and treat our customers and partners fairly and with respect and have transparent decision-making.
- Provide equality of opportunity for everyone – treat staff fairly and with respect.

A new [Corporate Plan](#) was submitted to the Speaker's Committee on 26 February 2025; the evidence session and subsequent approval was achieved on 19 March 2025. The Corporate Plan embeds our EDI objectives further by aiming to overcome barriers to access and engagement, including improving voter information and democratic education. This work is particularly necessary as the UK Government plans to introduce votes at 16 throughout the UK, which already applies to devolved elections in Scotland and Wales. As our current workforce (approx. 224 staff at the end of the reporting period) is set to grow substantially over the period of the Corporate Plan we will continue to strive to be an employer of choice - attracting, retaining and developing diverse talent from across the UK.

**Examples of key policy developments include –**

#### **Implementation of the EDI strategy and NI Equality Scheme 2022-2027**

- The final meeting of the EDI sub-committee to the Board was held in March 2025. The EDI committee had been set up to improve governance and accountability of EDI within the Commission. Outcome - providing accountability for the delivery of the EDI strategy action plan.
- Improvements made to the monitoring of the action plan – action owners are aware of their responsibilities within the Action Plan, as it is now more meaningful, action-orientated, evidence-based and outcome-focused. Regular 1-1 meetings are held to ensure progress is being made, with working groups set up to ensure evidence-based decisions are made with regards to improving equality outcomes.

## Implementation of our People Strategy 2022-2025

A project board oversaw the delivery of four commitments that set out the priority areas, according to insights and staff survey results – EDI was one of the four commitments. This saw a series of initiatives introduced during the period –

- Introduced a new Learning & Development Framework - We launched the L&D framework which sets out expectations for employees, managers and corporately as well as what is in scope, access and communication. The four key areas of focus are:
  - leadership and management
  - personal development
  - professional development
  - corporate
- We secured access to the **Civil Service Learning (CSL)** website which has over 300 courses available across a range of topics. This platform allows staff to choose what to learn and at a convenient time.
- We have rolled out mandatory recruitment training for panel members and have introduced more inclusive recruitment practices including anonymous applications, diverse recruitment panels, unconscious bias training for all panel members and guaranteed interviews for disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria.
- We implemented a new HR System built for our specific needs to provide an improved reporting functionality across the HR and recruitment systems and the opportunity to review how we collect and store EDI data.
  - Phase 1 – allows us to monitor staff equality monitoring data providing us with an evidence base to identify gaps and determine appropriate initiatives.
  - Phase 2 – allows us to track the candidate journey from the application process through the recruitment process and beyond, to monitor success rates and trends for under-represented groups.
  - Phase 3 - final phase of the system rollout will introduce a Talent Management module and Learning Management System which gives us the option to integrate all our training, development, performance management and objectives setting processes onto the system, removing the need for any manual forms and objectives, and allows HR to view completion rates and send reminders out, whilst it allows L&D Team to track personal development and learning needs which forms part of their annual Learning Needs Analysis (LNA) and training plan.
- Launched a new staff induction programme early 2024 - new starters are provided with information about our legislative requirements, EDI commitments and membership with Inclusive Employers (outcomes –46 staff have attended the induction in the reporting period with a number reporting to have joined our staff networks and signing up with Inclusive Employers, as a result).

- EDI objectives for all staff – We have embedded the new culture charter and our commitment by having set EDI objectives in individual performance reviews. This will be more impactful now performance related pay has been introduced. We will maximise and value the diverse of all our staff so that everyone feels respected at work. Outcome - we will provide an inclusive and supportive working environment where all colleagues are treated with equality, dignity and respect and where everyone is treated fairly and has equal opportunities.
- Monitor data and feedback from annual people survey – shared internally with an email sent from the Chief Executive to encourage participation (achieved 85% response rate). Marked improvements were seen across all EDI metrics (see appendix one).

**Examples of key service delivery developments include –**

**Outreach, Engagement and Events**

- Worked with youth representatives across the UK - the outcome is to ensure that more young people will actively participate in democracy.
- Welcome to Your Vote week was held in March 2025. The event aims to support young people to develop the knowledge and confidence they need to cast their vote and discover other ways to get involved in democracy. Evaluation showed it had its biggest ever reach and impact: over 590,000 young people with 4,800 educators and partners, and 38 elected representatives involved. Our campaign with Ofcom and Shout out UK reached 1.7 million young people.
  - England: We partnered with a range of organisations such as Shout Out UK, Simple Politics, Ofcom, and the Children’s Commissioner for England for the first time. Our youth voice partners ran events and developed content across the week.
  - Northern Ireland: Our youth voice partner Northern Ireland Youth Forum hosted a roundtable event at City Hall in Belfast, sponsored by Belfast City Lord Mayor and attended by MLAs. More than 30 students took part in discussions on democracy, youth participation, and the challenges of misinformation and disinformation. The NI team contacted schools to ask if they could facilitate schools’ assemblies around the week and issued a press release focusing on specific NI data from the youth research.
  - Wales: A roundtable discussion was held at the Senedd on 12 March, involving ministers, our youth voice partner Children in Wales and other stakeholder organisations in attendance. Some of the young people involved with Children in Wales, created two art murals on the theme of “My Voice, My Vote” and the murals will be displayed at the event. The Welsh team also used the event to highlight key findings especially for Wales from the youth research.
  - Scotland: The Scotland team supported Children in Scotland to hold a Q&A session with a former MP and discussed why they became involved

in politics, how to get more women into politics and mis/disinformation. The team worked closely with partners, including the Scottish Parliament education team, to finalise resources for secondary schools.

- New school resources that focus on mis- and dis-information in elections have been created with under registered groups in mind and will form part of a strategy.
- We target under-represented groups with our public awareness campaigns. We design our public media campaigns targeting groups we know are less likely to be registered and who face barriers to voting. These groups include young people; recent movers; people experiencing homelessness; people with access needs including those with learning disabilities; Muslim women; Gypsy, Roma, Traveller; and LGBTQIA+ communities.
- In preparation for UKPGE – PS London (our creative and production partner) shared 550 assets across 21 different languages to ensure voters are fully informed to have their photo ID ready.
- May 2024 Voter ID campaign included specific targeting on digital channels towards ethnically diverse communities - so far, our early research shows that although awareness of the requirement to bring ID is lower in these audiences, it is on the rise.
  - Awareness increases for the May 2024 voter ID campaign (pre-wave research in January 2024 – post-wave research in May 2024). NB: These figures are only for England.
    - 18-24 year olds: 69% - 72%
    - Ethnic minority communities: 67% - 79%
    - C2DE audiences: 72% - 85%
  - Awareness levels following the UKPGE voter ID campaign (post-poll research, July 2024). NB: This is for the whole of GB and is therefore not fully comparable to the figures above.
    - 18-24 year olds: 71%
    - Ethnic minority communities: 76%
    - C2DE audiences: 86%
- Our campaign materials for 2025 considered research data from demographic groups to ensure reach to them is more effective. Registration and ID campaigns ran prior to May 2025 and included platforms that reach a more diverse audience, particularly those who are under-registered and those less likely to have voter ID. They also had audio description and closed captioning.
- Preparations are underway to expand our education work. We are commissioning a range of education partners who are:
  - providing guidance and supporting evidence on what works well in democratic education
  - working with schools and colleges to co-develop a framework that showcases best practice and signposts to good quality, impartial and impactful democratic education projects and schemes of work
  - developing education resources, including schemes of work, in line with relevant curriculums
  - creating and delivering training to teachers and youth practitioners

- supporting the dissemination of this work to schools, colleges, universities and youth groups
- We invited civil society organisations to propose action research projects, with the aim of understanding barriers and attitudes of groups that are disengaged or not registered, both of which impact on participation.
  - Action research projects involved RNID, Smart School Councils and United Response who ran activities to understand barriers and produce resources to support deaf voters and voters with a learning disability and/or autism.
  - Working with partners, we proactively provided resources in a range of accessible formats including Braille, Easy Read, audio and large print, and we ran training sessions for partners to build capacity and ensure case workers were confident when giving advice to the people they support ahead of the UK Parliament General Election. We continued to strengthen our networks to ensure we disseminated these resources to the people that need them. With a detailed knowledge of their residents, our local council partners also played a crucial role disseminating these resources.
- We published a [report](#) on young people's views on politics and voting in March 2025. Key findings include –
  - Less than half of young people in the UK say they are interested in UK politics. Levels of interest are similar among young people in England, Wales and Scotland, but around 10% lower for those in Northern Ireland.
  - Awareness of the parliaments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is generally low: 18% know a lot about what the Northern Irish Assembly does.
  - Young people come across political content in many places, but they can't always be sure it's reliable. Many of them agree that there should be more democratic education in schools and colleges: 72% think children and young people should learn more about politics in school/college.
- Continued to hold regular meetings with the Northern Ireland Assembly Parties' Panel (NIAPP) - meetings take place every quarter and EDI has been added as a standing item to the agenda with guest speakers invited to discuss an EDI topic every meeting. This provides the opportunity to increase awareness of relevant and emerging issues with the NI Electoral Office and Political Parties in NI. Examples include –
  - Foyle Women's Information Network discussed issues relating to the women's sector in Northern Ireland, including women's democratic engagement and candidate intimidation and abuse which was very insightful.
  - Mencap NI provided insights and shared lived experience of voter journey. They highlighted the need for improvements in easy-read manifestos and expressed their willingness to support parties in enhancing engagement with individuals with learning disabilities.

## Accessible registration and voting

- Attended the Accessibility of Elections working group, led by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. We provided an update, including post-poll report recommendations.
- UK Government positively responded on our post-poll report including recommendations on accessibility. They are keen to raise awareness of accessibility support available.
- Work to transition our guidance into the more accessible HTML format continues and the next milestone will be the publication of updated guidance to support the 2026 elections in Wales and Scotland.
- We successfully passed our annual accessibility audit for our website in February 2025. We are now using Silktide as our website governance tool. This helps us monitor the accessibility of our website and its content year-round. We are working through the flagged issues with our website agency and content owners.
- In-house accessibility survey was designed for both May 2024 polls and the UK General Election to gather evidence from a range of sources evaluating people's experiences of registering to vote and the act of voting, including the impact of voter ID and the changes to support available. This included local authorities in Great Britain and a NI specific version on assessing our accessibility measures and our guidance.
- Results were shared with the Accessibility of Elections working group, led by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to consider. We have attended all meetings of the Working Group and provided an update on our work. This included our research and reporting work on the polls. The UK Government also responded positively to our post-poll report including our recommendations on improving accessibility.
- Our voter ID resources for the May 25 elections include information in Braille, audio, large print and BSL. Information in Easy Read, created by United Response, will also be made available.
- We continue to monitor the impact in respect of the UK government Electoral Reform projects.
- Our resources continue to reflect feedback from partners representing groups with protected characteristics, particularly our re-branded 'Guide to Elections' (which combines our old 'Guide for Staff' and 'Voter Booklet' on voter ID and registration). We published our new guides to elections and anonymous voting in the New Year.
- Worked with partners in Northern Ireland, including RNIB to produce a guide for voters with sight loss and we also presented to TEO Race Equality Sub-group to raise awareness of voter information. The Director from RNIB NI thanked us for our efforts to try and make this the most accessible election ever in Northern Ireland.
- Published [public opinion data](#) on satisfaction with the electoral process for 2025 – there has been an increase in satisfaction with the administration of elections this year. Satisfaction with the process of voting and registering to vote, and confidence that elections are well run are close to an all-time high.

- Following the UK general election, there has been an increase in:
  - The proportion of people who believe elections are well-run
  - The proportion of people who are satisfied with voting and registration processes
  - The number of people who felt confident in their ability to vote and register. This has increased to 95% and 93%, respectively (up from 92% and 89%)
  - The proportion of people satisfied with the way democracy works in the UK

### **Transparent political campaigning and political finance**

- For the May 2025 elections, we produced two new animated videos to help candidates understand what they need to do to stand for election and explain how to complete their nomination papers correctly. These videos complement the more detailed guidance contained in our candidates and agents' guidance, but break down the key messages in simple language, supported by graphics. We shall be inviting ROs and political parties to share these videos to prospective candidates and publicising in our various bulletins and on our website.
- We will evaluate how these videos were used in the May 2025 polls to inform our wider corporate plan work to expand the way we produce guidance in the future.
- We are actively trying to better support our regulated stakeholders with accessibility needs. For the UKPGE we offered support through our online advice surgeries (15-minute individual meetings to discuss specific issues with stakeholders). Between 18-20 June 2024, we held 7 webinars and 18 advice surgeries over this period to support candidates prior to the UKPGE.
- Discussions with the registration team to ensure, as an organisation, that we are doing our best to support disabled individuals looking to register a political party and understand the rules and regulations involved with that. This was to ensure we were making information accessible, offering appropriate support, and supporting the team (registration) with undertaking this.
- A review to consider the application process and systems for registering parties with a focus on accessibility was initiated. This involved working with an agency to ensure accessibility and ease of understanding by the user. Shared first draft with parties and received positive feedback. Forms should be introduced for use for May elections.
- Media engagement plan has been developed to address intimidation of candidates. Research on the May 2023 elections shows that 36% of candidates who responded said they had some kind of problem with abuse, intimidation or harassment. This rose to 55% when shown a list of harassment scenarios. The problem is particularly acute among women candidates and those from an ethnic minority. We will advocate for the safety of candidates and campaigners, provide them with guidance and highlight the challenges they face and the detrimental impact this has on our democracy.
- In January 2025, in partnership with the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (EONI), we published a new Code of Conduct for campaigners in Northern

Ireland. We consulted widely on this with all registered political parties in Northern Ireland. The consultation began in April 2024 but was paused when the UKPGE was announced. The consultation recommenced in the Autumn. The Code provides a guide for campaigners for what is, and is not, acceptable behaviour at polling stations and in the community (including online) during the lead-up to polling day. It contains information about the new offence of handling postal voting documents by campaigners and the requirement of secrecy for postal voters.

### **Resilient local electoral services**

- Worked with local authorities in Great Britain to support their delivery of elections - raising awareness and monitoring performance standards, to support and challenge [Returning Officers](#) (ROs) to deliver services that have equality impacts in mind. We ensure that support is provided when planning for and delivering elections. This includes ensuring that everyone who is eligible and wants to vote and/or stand for election, can do so and has confidence in the process.
- Poor performance is assessed as issues arise, and we consider if there has been a disproportionate impact on a particular characteristic and act accordingly.
- Reviewed data to monitor abuse and intimidation levels, particularly against those groups most at risk, including female and ethnically diverse candidates. We can advocate for the safety of candidates and campaigners, provide them with guidance and highlight the challenges they face and the detrimental impact this has on our democracy. We also made recommendations in the post-poll report. This work will also be picked up in the corporate plan projects to support trust in the system around ethical campaigning and directly tackle the threat that intimidation and abuse poses.

### **Modern and sustainable electoral system**

- Corporate plan project approved to develop measures to assess equality impacts when evaluating the health of the democratic system and review whether intersectionality produces additional impacts.
- We are also preparing for language provision in readiness for the implementation of the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022.
- Maintained our contingency plans - we continued to maintain contingency plans which includes guidance on accessibility for unscheduled electoral events, including a UK parliamentary general election and a Northern Ireland Assembly election. We developed and monitored a risk register in respect of planning for the UKPGE to ensure that equality impacts were considered consistently as part of decision making.

2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2024-25 (or append the plan with progress/examples identified).

**Objective 1 - EDI in the democratic process**

Outcomes	Activities
To maximise the number of people who can participate in the democratic process by understanding the issues and barriers people encounter throughout the democratic process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reported on the experiences of those participating in elections, recommending improvements to partners and stakeholders.</li> <li>• We ensure all agencies we work with have signed up to the Market Research Society EDI Code of Conduct, which emphasises the importance of diversity and inclusion, ensuring that research practices are fair and equitable for all participants.</li> </ul>
To improve accessibility for voters and raise awareness of support available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We conducted accessibility surveys, and improved website functionality- see <a href="#">accessibility statement from website</a>.</li> <li>• We set standards and monitor the performance of Returning Officers (ROs) and Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) through our performance standards framework.</li> <li>• We made recommendations to improve accessibility for registering to vote and access at polling stations.</li> </ul>
To maximise the number of people who know how to register and vote.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted multi-media public awareness campaigns are designed with under-represented groups in mind, such as young people, those with learning disabilities and ethnic minority communities.</li> </ul>

**Objective 2 – Embed EDI in everything we do and make changes, because of engagement with our stakeholders and partners.**

To increase trust and confidence amongst under-represented groups of candidates, campaigners and parties in the electoral system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Met with representatives from various political parties and UK Police Forces to discuss intimidation in politics.</li> </ul>
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<p>To ensure the contractors we use are committed to EDI</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We use Crown Commercial Services Frameworks for all procurements by default. As a prerequisite to registration on these frameworks, suppliers are required to evidence their commitment to EDI.</li> <li>• For procurement events whereby we are engaging outside of frameworks, the Procurement Team have committed to the inclusion of EDI evaluation criteria, where appropriate. To underpin this commitment, we are asking our stakeholders to consider EDI at the outset of each procurement event.</li> </ul>
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**Objective 3 – Equality of Opportunity for all staff**

<p>To support equality of opportunity and foster good relations for staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDI communication program implemented, and data monitored (see appendix two) with over 5000 views recorded during the period on a range of topics shared by individuals, creating a culture of trust with more people coming forward to share their lived experiences.</li> <li>• In the last 12 months L&amp;D have really emphasised disability and mental health &amp; wellbeing EDI in our training offer and have rolled out a suite of sessions on various topics attended by over 200 staff in total.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ EDI training plan 24/25 rolled out with more staff reporting they feel there is appropriate training in place around diversity and inclusion.</li> <li>○ Feedback from training is monitored and reviewed (see appendix three)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Equality monitoring data has improved significantly within the Commission with 91 % of staff having shared their personal data with us.</li> <li>• EDI objective in individual performance review – mandatory for everyone as part of the new Performance Management</li> </ul>
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	<p>system to ensure everyone sees EDI as their responsibility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting HR policies – family friendly policy including parental leave, attendance management, flexible working, menopause and special leave are included on the HR pages of the intranet.</li> <li>• The Commission is committed to facilitating flexible working such as staggered hours, part-time hours or condensed hours where possible to support home and work life, this is most helpful for those staff with caring responsibilities or those impacted by health or disability considerations.</li> <li>• Membership with Inclusive Employers (we joined in January 2024 with a total of 48 people registered by the end of the reporting period) – provides access to EDI resources, weekly webinars, blogs and training.</li> <li>• Induction programme redesigned – includes information about our statutory requirements and commitment to EDI. 46 people have attended this in the reporting period.</li> <li>• Creation of two new staff-led networks representing the diverse voices of under-represented groups within the Commission and raising awareness of barriers faced.</li> <li>• Two Executive Sponsors were appointed to support the staff networks and advocate for them at Executive level.</li> <li>• Take an evidence-based approach to EDI initiatives, listening to feedback from staff obtained through our annual survey.</li> <li>• Ensure our IT systems are accessible and inclusive – replacement of laptops and removal of virtual desktop.</li> </ul>
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PART A

**3** Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2024-25 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

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

Please provide any details and examples:

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

Please provide any details and examples:

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

As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy *(please give details):*

As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise *(please give details):*

As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details):*

As a result of changes to access to information and services *(please specify and give details):*

Other *(please specify and give details):*

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

### Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

- 4 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2024-25 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*
- Yes, organisation wide
  - Yes, some departments/jobs
  - No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
  - No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
  - Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

This is only relevant to the Equality Teams job roles.

- 5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2024-25 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*
- Yes, organisation wide
  - Yes, some departments/jobs
  - No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
  - No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
  - Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Our guidance for corporate planning required Directorates to include appropriate objectives on EDI. The objectives were written during this reporting period and will be monitored via our performance monitoring system for subsequent years.

- 6 In the 2024-25 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? *(tick all that apply)*
- Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
  - Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning

PART A

- Yes, in some departments/jobs
- No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's ongoing corporate plan
- No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2024-25 report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The revised EDI action plan and new Corporate Plan have been developed with EDI objectives and performance measures in place. Reporting and progress is tracked as part of monitoring the delivery of our operational plans.

**Equality action plans/measures**

7 Within the 2024-25 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:  Actions ongoing:  Actions to commence:

Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

[EDI action plan - workbook for updates March 2025.xlsx](#)

8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2024-25 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

N/A

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2024-25 reporting period, the following have been identified: (*tick all that apply*)

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

**Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)**

PART A

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

All the time                       Sometimes                       Never

- 11** Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2024-25 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

Please refer to question 1.

- 12** In the 2024-25 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: *(tick all that apply)*

- Face to face meetings
- Focus groups
- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- Questionnaires
- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- Internet discussions
- Telephone consultations
- Other *(please specify)*:

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

Responses would be mostly sent by email.

- 13** Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2024-25 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

Yes                       No                       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

PART A

14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2024-25 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes       No       Not applicable – no commitment to review

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

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

6
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- Voter Education Project
- Pay Structure Review
- Teams Project
- Laptop replacement Project
- Performance Management Guidance
- Electoral Reform Project

16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2024-25:


- Policy consultations conducted with **screening** assessment presented.
- Policy consultations conducted **with an equality impact assessment (EQIA)** presented.
- Consultations for an **EQIA** alone.

17 Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:

The consultation exercise had been paused after the announcement of the UK General Election.

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



- 22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2024-25 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

N/A

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

N/A

### **Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)**

- 24** Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2024-25, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

Training to include awareness of the provisions of our Equality Scheme and conducting Equality Screenings. The following has been implemented -

- All relevant information/training about the Scheme and equality screenings have been included on the EDI pages on intranet.
- EDI lead has briefed individual teams on both elements.
- Information on our statutory obligations is provided in induction programme
- Mandatory EDI training will be considered and included in next year's report.
- EDI related training plan has been implemented and is being rolled out (see appendix two)

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

Feedback is routinely monitored after all training sessions to ensure participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge from attending the session.

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

- 26** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2024-25, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

We provided public information support via website, email, telephone and in accessible formats. We run an annual accessibility audit to assess the website against accessibility

standards. This method uses both manual auditing with assistive technologies and automated auditing. We monitor accessibility year-round using an accessibility tool.

We provide information in a range of alternative formats on request and work in partnership with a range of organisations to reach more young people, disabled people and ethnically diverse communities.

### Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

27 How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2024-25?

Insert number here:

0
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Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

### Section 3: Looking Forward

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

Our NI Equality Scheme was created in August 2022 revised by the Equality Commission. A five-year review will be conducted in 2027.

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

We will continue to focus on training and raising awareness of equality screening new/reviewed workplace policies.

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

- Employment
- Goods, facilities and services
- Legislative changes
- Organisational changes/ new functions
- Nothing specific, more of the same
- Other (please state):

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

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

Fully achieved

Partially achieved

Not achieved

We have updated our Disability Action plan and incorporated activities into the revised EDI Action plan.

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

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

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs <sup>i</sup>	Outcomes / Impact <sup>ii</sup>
Local <sup>iii</sup>	To encourage disabled people to participate in public life	Ensuring disability inclusion in our public awareness campaigns and ensuring our campaign materials reflect and represent positive images of disabled people	More disabled people are aware how to register to vote and participate in Elections
	To encourage disabled people to participate in public life	Media interviews with outlets aimed at disabled voters, including RNIB radio and BBC R4's In Touch programme. Interviews covered accessible voting and trials to test	To encourage more blind and partially sighted people to vote

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		new equipment to support blind and partially sighted people to vote	
	To encourage disabled people to participate in public life	Co-created packs with our civil society partners to ensure tailored resources for key voter-facing resources in a range of accessible formats.	Resources provided included easy read, BSL, audio, braille and large print
	To encourage disabled people to participate in public life	Our <a href="#">guidance</a> to ensure that polling stations are accessible for disabled people to vote. Returning Officers to take steps to assist disabled voters at the elections, but more needs to be done to raise awareness of what is available.	Following changes in the Elections Act 2022, electoral administrators now have increased flexibility on what support and equipment they can provide at the polling station to enable, or make it easier for, disabled people to vote independently and in secret. Restrictions have also been removed on who can be a 'companion'.
	To encourage disabled people to participate in public life	Job advertisements are published in Diversity Jobsite, Overlooked Talent, LGBT Equality, Ethnic Jobsite, Disability Jobsite, Britain Inclusive, Asian jobsite	More people from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities can apply for jobs in the Electoral Commission. We also offer a guaranteed interview to disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria.
	To encourage disabled people to participate in public life	Updated our welcome statement and 'join us' page on website to promote flexible working	More disabled people will apply for jobs in the Electoral Commission. We have introduced a new

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		arrangements to include our commitment to EDI and the Disability Confident Scheme.	recruitment system to be able to track this data.
	To encourage disabled people to participate in public life	We ask applicants to indicate any reasonable adjustments which may be required to assist them during the recruitment process	Applicants are asked if they require any adjustments at any stage of the recruitment process.  Examples include providing candidates with the questions in advance of the interview.
	To encourage disabled people to participate in public life	WCAG compliant and WACG audit to ensure we are compliant Accessibility partner Zoonou	We have completed our annual accessibility audit of the website, and the site is now WACG 2.2 AA complaint - we're only required to meet 2.1 AA, but wanted to ensure maximum accessibility.
	To encourage disabled people to participate in public life	To ensure accessibility at all events, meetings and in offices	When organising events, accessibility or special requirements are accommodated, where possible. Contact information provided for guests who require specific access arrangements.
	To encourage disabled people to participate in public life	To create opportunities for people with disabilities to campaign and stand for election	We developed animated videos to support candidate understand what they need to do to stand for election and explain to how to complete their nomination papers properly.

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	To encourage disabled people to participate in public life	Update the postal vote application forms to ensure any new requirements are reflected in clear and user-friendly designs.	Forms will be published in accessible PDF format in line with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards.
	To encourage disabled people to participate in public life	To provide alternative formats for disabled voters on how to register and vote.	Provided BSL video and easy read versions.
	To mainstream the disability duties in Commission activities	To submit our Annual Progress Report and Disability Action plan to the EDI committee and Equality Commission.	Submitted on time with approval from the Executive Team, demonstrating our commitment to fulfilling our Section 75 obligations.
	To encourage disabled people to participate in public life	Ensuring all consultations engage with disabled people and representative groups.	We have successful partnership arrangements with a range of representative groups such as Mencap, RNID, RNIB.

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

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Ensure all staff are aware of Disability Duties and the DAP.	Unconscious Bias training	Mandatory training introduced for all Recruitment Panels - 60 people trained in period)
2	Ensure all staff are aware of Disability Duties and the DAP.	L&D suite of disability and wellbeing related topics rolled out	194 people attended the following courses –

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men's Mental Health: Breaking the barriers</li> <li>• Equally Yours Session 4</li> <li>• Equally Yours Session 3</li> <li>• Mindset Webinar 2</li> <li>• Ableism and Disability Inclusion</li> <li>• Mindset Webinar 1</li> <li>• Manage Modern Day Burnout: 7</li> <li>• Everything You Wanted to Know about Disability But Were Too Afraid to Ask</li> <li>• Learning Hour - EAP Health Assured</li> </ul>
3	Ensure all staff are aware of Disability Duties and the DAP.	Mental Health First Aider Training	2 staff have renewed their training in the period.
4	Ensure all staff are aware of Disability Duties and the DAP.	We developed a disability information hub to update staff on our commitment to Disability Confident Scheme.	All staff will know where to find information using a dedicated page on Disability duties and our statutory obligations, social model of disability, inclusive language and disability inclusive practices.

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Identify opportunities to portray positive images of disabled	Campaigns – Our advert for Voter ID features an actress with a prosthetic leg. Our Registration campaign features	Our website and communications continue to be more accessible, particularly to those using screen reading software – for example, PDFs are

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	people, in both internal and external communications,	a person with learning disabilities. Our campaigns are planned to be inclusive and accessible.	now either made accessible directly or have been replaced by webpages which work with screen readers.  In our campaigns we provide closed captions, subtitles, easy read formats, and test our creative with people who have a range of disabilities, including neurodiversity and colour blindness. This has increased accessibility for our adverts.
2	Consider how the views of disabled staff are incorporated in the promotion of disability equality in the workplace and in policies, practices, and procedures.	We always seek the views of disabled staff when implementing new policies/ processes, via consultation and our updated process for Equality Impact Assessments.	Policy decisions take appropriate account of the needs of disabled people and the barriers they face.
3	Ensure all communications are accessible	Our communications are made accessible and are available in other formats	Disability awareness – resources, guides and information published on ECHO pages under Disability and updated about our Commitment under DCS.

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

Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact

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1	Build actions and targets relating to the disability duties into work plans and annual operating plans, whilst ensuring that the corporate planning process is informed by adherence to all relevant equality duties	Plans have been put in place to include EDI objective in performance management process with all staff	We continue to build on the reporting mechanisms in place to monitor and progress our Disability Action Plan
2	To promote positive attitudes towards disabled people	Active promotion of disability inclusion calendar days to raise awareness amongst staff	Greater awareness of disabilities and understanding the social model of disability
3	To promote positive attitudes towards disabled people	Host events for Macmillan Cancer - Coffee Morning 3rd October 2024 Autism NI – 6th December 2024 Time to Talk coffee morning – 6th February 2025	Raise awareness and demonstrate support for disabled people.
4	Committed to supporting staff with disabilities	Supporting colleagues with a disability with support from OH and introduced assistance dog guidance for the Commission.	The Commission is committed to supporting staff who struggle with physical or mental illness or disabilities. HR have made 18 OH referrals in the last year compared to 8 the year before that. A member of staff brings their support dog into the office to work.
5	To promote positive attitudes towards disabled people	Achieved the next level with Disability Confident	Able to display that we are a Disability Confident Employer on our website and job adverts to encourage more disabled people to join the Commission.

2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

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	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1	Submit annual review of DAP	Review submitted to ECNI	Outcomes as outlined in this report
2	Committed to supporting staff with disabilities	Provided staff with accessible equipment to support them at home and in the office to enable them to do their job eg sit/stand desks, adaptable chairs.	IT equipment, such as adapted mouse, laptop risers and modified keyboards have been provided as reasonable adjustments for some staff. Where an occupational health assessment has been carried out, we then review the assessment and provide the required hardware, software and furniture.
3	Committed to supporting staff with disabilities	Introduced a Guaranteed Interview Scheme to encourage more disabled people to apply for roles at the Commission.	To increase the number of disabled staff employed within the Commission

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones/ Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	Remove barriers to the selection process	Ensuring and making it clear to disabled applicants, that all documentation is	More applications from disabled people in accessible formats	The new HR recruitment system is newly implemented, and we are working to improve the

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		available on request in accessible formats		functions of the system for disabled candidates.
2	Committed to supporting staff with disabilities	Develop an Estates Strategy to ensure accessibility is considered.	Office space and home working guidance is designed with accessibility in mind	Scoping exercise has begun and a project team has been set up.

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

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1		

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

Click or tap here to enter text.

(b) Quantitative

After each election we ask members of the public for their views on voting and elections, which helps us understand their experiences. The survey sample is boosted with disabled voters to allow us to better understand their experiences. Our accessibility guidance for Returning Officers will be consulted upon for the next period.

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Also after each election we send an accessibility survey to all partners working with disabled people to gather their views on the election and how we can better support them in our partnership work.

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

Please select

No

If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1			

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

The Disability Action Plan, along with the EDI action plan which will be regularly updated in line with best practices, research and data. The focus will be to obtain accurate disability data from current staff and to track disabled candidates during the application and appointment process. We will also be reviewing our recruitment process to ensure any new initiatives and associated projects will be evidence-led.

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- <sup>i</sup> **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.
- <sup>ii</sup> **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.
- <sup>iii</sup> **Local** : Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora.

Appendix one

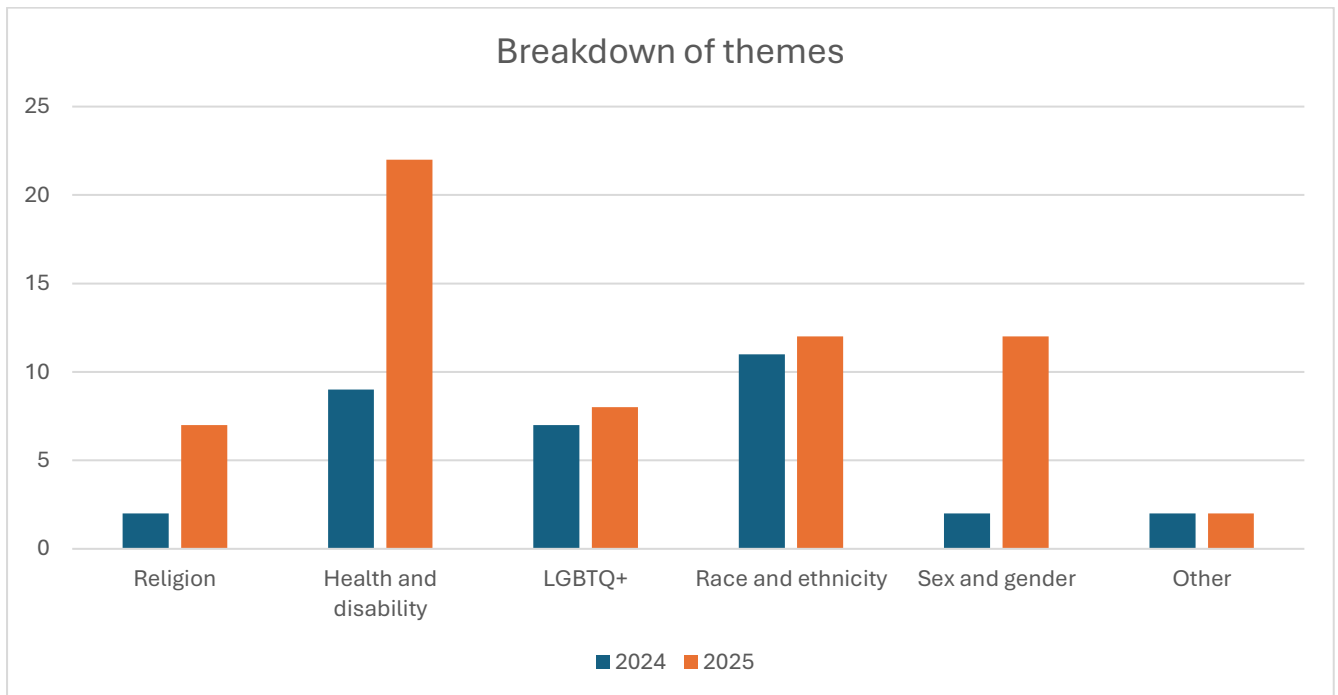
Framework	EDI metrics (% agree)	% in 2023*	TARGET	% in 2024* (difference)
<b>EMPOWER</b> - <i>create space for staff to share stories and raise awareness.</i>	I feel communication around diversity and inclusion is good within the Commission	56	70	83 (+27)
<b>ENGAGE</b> - <i>focus on internal communication and training.</i>	Within the Commission I feel there is appropriate training in place around diversity and inclusion	47	60	78 (+31)
<b>EQUIP</b> - <i>staff with knowledge, experience and guidance they need to deliver inclusion.</i>	The Commission is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace	65 (- 7% from 2022)	75	82 (+17)

\*2023 and 2024 saw 85% response rates

Appendix Two – workforce size approx. 220 staff

EDI post heading	Views	Comments	Likes	Date
<a href="#">EDI action plan has been refreshed</a>	17		1	26/03/2024
<a href="#">Are you feeling under pressure, stressed or burnt out?</a>	11		2	04/10/2024
<a href="#">Call for volunteers - Pride month</a>	100		8	17/04/2024
<a href="#">Passover</a>	63		12	22/04/2024
<a href="#">weekly webinars for May</a>	71		3	25/04/2024
<a href="#">d/deaf awareness week</a>	104	6	25	07/05/2024
<a href="#">Welcome to Pride month</a>	167	2	31	31/05/2024
<a href="#">Being an ally and respecting pronouns</a>	117		10	10/06/2024
<a href="#">LGBTQ+ families</a>	121	3	39	18/06/2024
<a href="#">Windrush Day</a>	130	7	44	21/06/2024
<a href="#">Pride month - LGBTQ+ inclusion</a>	92	6	32	24/06/2024
<a href="#">Latest news - July webinars</a>	69		1	27/06/2024
<a href="#">EDI in action</a>	59		6	01/08/2024
<a href="#">What community really looks like</a>	152	5	47	05/08/2024
<a href="#">Free to Be Me</a>	222	13	45	12/08/2024
<a href="#">Disability, data, intersectionality and more</a>	64		4	27/08/2024
<a href="#">Let's open the conversation around suicide</a>	131	4	42	08/09/2024
<a href="#">East and South East Asian Heritage Month</a>	102	3	25	18/09/2024
<a href="#">Reclaiming narratives</a>	215	10	44	02/10/2024
<a href="#">Reclaiming narratives continued</a>	172	11	50	08/10/2024
<a href="#">Coming up in October</a>	80	2	2	09/10/2024
<a href="#">Be breast aware</a>	99		20	14/10/2024
<a href="#">Little Jamaica</a>	159	10	35	21/10/2024
<a href="#">Black History Month quiz</a>	60	2	10	29/10/2024
<a href="#">Movember and men's mental health</a>	125		8	04/11/2024
<a href="#">Reasonable adjustments and disability inclusion</a>	91		9	04/12/2024
<a href="#">Get 2025 off to a great start</a>	162		15	06/01/2025
<a href="#">Happy Hanukkah!</a>	151	4	47	07/01/2025
<a href="#">2025 improvements from Inclusive Employers</a>	62		2	22/01/2025
<a href="#">Time to Talk Day</a>	94		14	27/01/2025
<a href="#">Holocaust Memorial Day</a>	101		26	27/01/2025
<a href="#">Happy World Hijab Day!</a>	96	3	24	31/01/2025
<a href="#">Time to Talk Day 2025</a>	55		9	11/02/2025
<a href="#">My Epilepsy Story</a>	217	2	55	12/02/2025

<a href="#">Celebrating Neurodiversity in the Workplace</a>	109	1	13	21/02/2025
<a href="#">Ramadan: Showing Support</a>	104	1	25	24/02/2025
<a href="#">Voices of Inclusion</a>	137		23	25/02/2025
<a href="#">Assistance Dogs in the Commission</a>	349		11	28/02/2025
<a href="#">Inclusion Insights March 2025</a>	104		4	04/03/2025
<a href="#">International Women's Day: The Mimosa Flower</a>	71	3	24	10/03/2025
<a href="#">Happy Saint Patrick's Day</a>	85	0	18	14/03/2025
<a href="#">Sign Language Awareness Week</a>	119	2	29	17/03/2025
<a href="#">Introducing Stanley</a>	296		83	21/03/2025
<a href="#">Inclusion Insights April 2025</a>	117		17	27/03/2025



## Appendix Three

### **EMPOWER - create space for staff to share stories and raise awareness.**

*Thank you so much for sharing your story, as well as raising awareness. I really look forward to learning more in the sessions you've kindly arranged.*

Brilliant and brave post. Thank you! I will sponsor you! There are others in the Commission with non-visible conditions.

*Thank you for writing this blog and getting us all to think about the different reasons someone might wear the hijab.*

Thanks for sharing your story. Showing that there are different kinds of families is an important lesson for us all. Thanks for being a role model!

### **ENGAGE - focus on internal communication and training.**

I am writing to thank ... for arranging and presenting an outstanding and timely session on neurodiversity... the excellent talk inspired me to confide with my team (all of whom attended the session) ... I had an overwhelmingly positive response.... I am hoping that this will help me to thrive (in your words!) in my new role.

*I want to personally thank you for organising the staff network training workshop. I was apprehensive at first, but can honestly say that the workshop was informative, thought provoking, a breath of fresh and all those other accolades.*

The training also encouraged me to reach out to my line manager regarding awareness and potential avenues for reasonable adjustments – which I will do shortly.

### **EQUIP - staff with knowledge, experience and guidance they need to deliver inclusion.**

*ED&I within the Electoral Commission has come leaps and bounds .... We have already seen such great, positive change .... Excited to see all the great things that are to come and thank you for ensuring we are working towards a more inclusive, diverse workplace!*

Thanks so much for your time and insights. Supporting disabled voters is a central part of my team's work so this is really helpful.

*We have made excellent progress on EDI in recent years.*