



## **Public Consultation on the Report:**

### **Section 75 - Acting on the evidence of public authority practices**

**Closing date for responses: Wednesday 31 January 2018**

**Published: November 2017**

## **Background**

It is almost 20 years since the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement and the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Much in the landscape has changed in the intervening period. But what has remained constant, recognising some progress, is the need to continue to address inequalities in NI. Some of these are enduring inequalities and some are more recently emerging – it is imperative that public authorities effectively mainstream equality and good relations considerations in the planning and delivery of public policy and the public services for which they are responsible.

## **Report for Consultation**

The Equality Commission has been considering evidence of public authorities' practices in implementing their Section 75 duties. We now present the evidence gathered with a focus on the issues, recommendations and proposed actions identified for public authorities to address as a matter of priority, and on the delivery of our statutory remit relating to the S75 duties

The report and other related materials can be found on the Commission's website:

<http://www.equalityni.org/Employers-Service-Providers/Public-Authorities/Section75/Section-75-consultation>

## Seeking your views

The Commission would welcome comments, particularly on the **issues identified, recommendations and proposed actions associated to them.**

We are consulting until **Wednesday 31 January 2018** and would welcome your response by this date.

This document provides a number of questions and the opportunity to comment on the issues, recommendations and actions contained in the report.

You can submit written comments on this form as a Word document, or online by completing the questions in our survey here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/section75consultation>

## To submit your response, or for further information

If you would like any further information, information in an alternative format, or to submit your response, please contact us, as follows:

Section 75 Consultation  
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland  
Equality House  
Shaftsbury Square  
Belfast  
BT2 7DP

Email: [section75@equalityni.org](mailto:section75@equalityni.org)

Telephone: 028 9050 0600

Web: [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)

## Consultation questions

Question 1: Does the evidence presented in chapters 2-7, in your view, support the issues identified?

Yes     No     Don't know

Question 1a: Please provide any further comments –

The Statutory Duty Network would like to comment as follows:

- There needs to be a link to actions with some useful practical examples of best practice.
- Equality Officers from Councils and the Housing Executive are very familiar with the details of Section 75, however they would like additional information on current good/best practice within the public sector.
- In recent years officers have had no feedback from their Annual Report returns – it is understandable that not every report can have individual feedback however a commentary/summary of general points or learning points from submitted reports could be provided by ECNI via their website and e-zine.

Question 2: Are there other issues in public authority practices you would like to highlight?

Yes  No  Don't know

Question 2a: Please provide details, and the evidence base, from which you have drawn the issues –

The Statutory Duty Network would like to highlight the following issues:

- Presently, the Equality Commission's Disability team can provide good practice examples it would be useful for the Section 75 team to do likewise.
- Previous research into Section 75 issues does not seem to have been utilised or findings acted upon – previous reports have been published on the Commission's website and little follow-up work has been published since.
- Council leaders (i.e. Chief Executives and Elected Members) should receive awareness training on Section 75 and its obligations. We suggest a review of the Equality Commission's methodology and practices for working with Elected Members and this should include advice specific to Councils, for example regarding notice of motions and so forth.
- A standard preliminary screening form should be developed by the Equality Commission for use in public sector bodies as there are issues which can sometimes be screened out quite quickly.

Question 3: Do you agree with the recommendations to public authorities?

Yes  No  Don't know

Question 3a: Please provide any further comments –

- There should be further detail on timescales for the implementation of recommendations.
- These recommendations are aimed at a very high level, there needs to be further detail at a lower level that can be put into practice by Officers.
- There should be links (on the Equality Commission website) of where to find relevant data, or data sources – this will insure that all authorities have a similar base.

Question 4: Do you have any other suggested recommendations that are supported by the evidence presented?

Yes  No  Don't know

Question 4a: Please provide any further comments –

- A timetable for the training and engagement with Elected Members should be detailed and acted upon.
- In section 5.22 of the consultation document – it mentions “wide variations in practice” – it would be useful to have some commentary on the variety of practices and what they are (e.g. which are good and which are bad/not so good).

Question 5: Do you have any other recommendations supported by additional evidence referred to in this response?

Yes  No  Don't know

Question 5a: Please provide any further comments –

- It would be useful to provide some summary Section 75 data on the Equality Commission website to ensure that every public authority has a similar baseline study with which to work. This work will have been completed before and should be updated on an annual basis.
- We suggest a piece of work is undertaken by ECNI & NISRA to develop this data set therefore ensuring all Public Authorities have access to the same information.
- Local Councils would welcome advice and data on rural proofing. This would be beneficial as all Councils require this information.

Question 6: The Commission is interested to receive any commented on its proposed actions as set out in paragraph 9.8 –

- Senior Leaders – there should be some clarity on who this refers to specifically.
- Will there be consequences if the Equality Commission do not engage with leaders?
- What items will be under discussion – will it include advice on contentious issues?
- Councils require more guidance and advice on the more controversial issues that are relevant to all Local Government Authorities in Northern Ireland.
- There should be more advice/guidance available to Councils on the newly acquired responsibilities – e.g. Planning, etc.

## Your details

Your personal details will only be used to clarify answers (if necessary) and to validate survey responses.

Name	Finbar Maguire
Address	Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
Address 2	2 Townhall Street
City/Town	Enniskillen
Postal code	BT74 7BA
Email	finbar.maguire@fermanaghomagh.com

Are you completing this survey as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

**Individual**  **Organisation**

Please name the organisation if you are completing this survey on their behalf:

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council

**Thank you for your consideration and response.**

**Equality Commission**

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

**Equality Commission for Northern Ireland**

Equality House  
7-9 Shaftesbury Square  
Belfast BT2 7DP

**Telephone:** 028 90 500 600

**Textphone:** 028 90 500 589

**Fax:** 028 90 331 993

**Email:** [Section75@equalityni.org](mailto:Section75@equalityni.org)

**Web:** [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND