

British Council Northern Ireland



Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2023-24

Contact:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Equality Scheme	Name: Sarah Brisbane Telephone: Email: sarah.brisbane@britishcouncil.org
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan	As above X Name: Sarah Brisbane Telephone: Email: sarah.brisbane@britishcouncil.org

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

<http://nireland.britishcouncil.org/about/equal-opportunities-diversity>

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "S Brisbane".

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 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024
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 2023-24, 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.

British Council Northern Ireland Work

The British Council continues to build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through work across our three pillars of arts and culture, education and the English language.

We work in two ways – directly with individuals to transform their lives, and with governments and partners to make a bigger difference for the longer term, creating benefit for millions of people all over the world.

We help young people to gain the skills, confidence and connections they are looking for to realise their potential and to participate in strong and inclusive communities. We support them to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications. Our work in arts and culture stimulates creative expression and exchange and nurtures creative enterprise.

We connect the best of the UK with the world and the best of the world with the UK. These connections lead to an understanding of each other's strengths and of the challenges and values that we share. This builds trust between people in the UK and other nations which endures even when official relations may be strained.

We work on the ground in more than 100 countries. In 2023-24 we connected with 80 million people directly and with 791 million overall, including online and through our broadcasts and publications.

COVID-19 has had a huge impact on the British Council's international operations in 2023-24 with loss of commercial income and a rapid shift to online classes and events which has resulted in significant changes to our ways of working.

1) EDUCATION

Education - Schools

We bring an international dimension to teaching and learning in schools with international links, professional development opportunities, curriculum resources, classroom support and awards.

Through our global network and portfolio of schools' programmes, we connect our school sector to others throughout the world to achieve two outcomes:

- 'Enriched education' - Sustained collaboration between us and other countries on professional development, curricula and system reform, and policy dialogue, which provides improved educational outcomes for young people
- 'Global citizenship increased' – Young people and educators demonstrate an increased capacity in the skills, understanding and outlook required to work in a global economy and contribute responsibly to society, locally and globally.

Both of these outcomes contribute to a more prosperous and secure society.

These endeavours are supported by many of our programmes some of which are summarised below: -

Schools Online - a one stop global portal for teachers around the world to find school partners, explore teaching resources and establish international links for professional development.

Language Assistants - work in primary and secondary schools, including sixth form and further education colleges to support language learning and inter-cultural understanding.

International School Award - a globally recognised accreditation which helps schools to enrich learning and improve teaching by guiding international learning activities, from introducing international education into the curriculum to embedding it within a school's culture.

Education - Higher/Further Education

As an international cultural relations organisation, the British Council promotes and supports the exchange and mobility of students, scholars and academics around the world. We use our expertise in higher education to build trust and understanding with other countries by:

- supporting the development of policy and practice in the UK and internationally
- building partnerships between institutions
- promoting the mobility of academics and students

Supporting the development of policy and practice in the UK and internationally

We contribute to the development of a global academic community by providing platforms to discuss higher education globally and promoting innovative research.

We believe that engaging the UK sector in working with policy makers and practitioners and their counterparts in other countries strengthens both nations.:

We contribute to the development of a global academic community by providing platforms to discuss higher education globally and promoting innovative research.

[Going Global Conference](#): each year leaders in higher education, business and government attended the British Council's annual Going Global conference. The conference took place in Edinburgh, Scotland, from the 20 to the 22 November 2023. The focus was on sustainable, scalable and equitable partnerships in tertiary education.

Building partnerships between institutions

We focus on developing education partnerships with institutions between the UK and their counterparts in other countries. Partnerships are a powerful mechanism to engage the UK internationally and to build connections, understanding and trust.

We help UK institutions to internationalise by providing market analysis and intelligence, developing research partnerships, and providing on the ground support for higher education partnerships.

We provide opportunities for higher education leaders to exchange knowledge and establish collaborations and list them under the [opportunities](#) page.

Promoting the mobility of academics and students

We encourage international study and support the exchange and mobility of students, scholars and academics around the world because we believe that experiencing another country first-hand provides an unparalleled opportunity for individuals to understand and engage with people from different cultures, share ideas and work to solve global challenges.

We manage a number of mobility grants and scholarships aimed at UK academics, scholars and students, details of which can be found on our [International Mobility](#) page.

Our work aims to support the capacity and capability of governments, institutions and individuals in the UK and other countries to take an active role in developing their country, their community and themselves.

Some of the more popular outward mobility programmes open to higher education students in Northern Ireland are:

Study USA

[The Study USA Programme](#) offers undergraduate students an opportunity to study business and management for one academic year at universities and colleges in the USA with the purpose of producing graduates with an international, business-oriented perspective.

TURING SCHEME

The [Turing Scheme](#) is the UK government's global programme to study and work abroad. The scheme provides funding for international opportunities in education and training across the world.

Eligible organisations can apply for funding through the Turing Scheme for projects that offer the opportunity to study or gain work experience abroad for the 2023-24 academic year.

SCIENCE

We work in partnership with the NI Science Festival to help internationalise the festival and enhance its global connections and reach.

2) ARTS

Our work in arts aims to promote the UK's diverse culture, creativity and innovation overseas. We work across various art forms and with the best of UK talent to develop artistic programmes and opportunities for collaboration in Northern Ireland.

Working jointly with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland through international work, we support and promote Northern Ireland's creative output.

The Artists' International Development Fund is an annual programme jointly funded by the British Council and Arts Council Northern Ireland. The aim of the programme is to support individual international developmental opportunities for talent and artistic excellence from Northern Ireland and, thereby, enhance Northern Ireland's international artistic development, reputation and standing.

British Council is a major partner in a number of festivals that occur in Northern Ireland throughout the year such as the Belfast International Arts Festival, and Outburst Queer Arts Festival.

3) ENGLISH and EXAMS

English teaching has been at the heart of the British Council's cultural relations work since 1943. What we do in English creates opportunities for millions of people around the world through education, mobility and international engagement. In Northern Ireland there are five British Council accredited English language centres.

The following initiatives have been developed to aid the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations:

- **LGBTQIA+ community for British Council colleagues**

The British Council prides itself on both its cultural relations and inclusion agenda, and one of the ways to incorporate this into our working life is the setting up a new voluntary led Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Other (LGBTQIA+) group. **LGBTQIA+ Community** aims to support colleagues identifying as LGBTQIA+ no matter where they live and work by fostering a support network and by raising a voice for LGBTQIA+ issues within the British Council. The group welcomes participation from all British Council LGBTQIA+ colleagues and allies. Each region has a regional lead who organises events and social meet-ups locally.

- **Disability Advisory Panel**

The British Council Disability Advisory Panel is made up of people with significant personal and professional experience of disability and act as a 'critical friend' to the Diversity Unit and other teams on request.

Two representatives from Northern Ireland sit on the panel: Equality Manager for Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and a Northern Ireland Disability Rights Activist. Both have great direct and indirect experience with disability and their areas of expertise are really broad. Further information about the Disability Advisory Panel can be found on our internal intranet.

- **Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion (enei)**

The British Council UK is subscribed to membership of the Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion (enei) 'the UK's leading employer network covering all aspects of equality and inclusion issues in the workplace'.

Whilst for cost reasons our membership is UK rather than global many of the resources available will have international applicability. Any staff member can sign up for access to a range of webinars and other online events.

- **Business Disability Forum**

British Council (via the Wellbeing team) is a member of the Business Disability Forum, another fantastic resource. It's a not-for-profit membership organisation that 'exists to create a disability smart world by linking businesses, disabled people and government.' The website hosts a knowledge hub, resources and toolkits and a regular events calendar which staff can access.

- **Disability Confident Employer**

The British Council is a [Disability Confident](#) Employer which provides a step towards increasing the low numbers of disabled people within the organisation by helping us recruit and retain disabled people and people with health conditions for their skills and talent.

A self-assessment template and a matrix have been completed by colleagues in the Diversity Unit and HR with the support of the Disability Working Group.

- **Mental Health Charter & Every Customer Counts**

British Council NI is a signatory of the *Mental Health Charter* for Northern Ireland employers and service providers. The Charter, jointly produced by the Equality Commission, Action Mental Health, Disability Action, Mindwise, Mental Health Foundation and Inspire provides a framework for working towards mentally healthy workplaces. As signatory to the Charter and its 5 commitments we undertake to promote positive mental health initiatives which will be beneficial to the organisation, employees and the whole community in Northern Ireland.

- **'Every Customer Counts' Commitment**

British Council Northern Ireland has signed up to the Equality Commission's *'Every Customer Counts' Commitment* which demonstrates our commitment to promoting accessible services to our customers and that we welcome reasonable adjustment requests. We completed a self-assessment tool to establish how open our services currently are to disabled people and identify how we could make improvements.

- **Living Library**

The British Council's Living Library is designed to promote dialogue between staff and encourage them to learn from and understand each other and engage directly in our rich diversity in a very direct way, led by what we are curious about and interested in. The library provides an excellent opportunity for intercultural learning and understanding of our incredible diversity. Staff may never have spoken in any detail to someone with particular experiences, or from a particular cultural or linguistic group. 'Living books' are given by members of staff who relay stories or accounts of their lives and backgrounds (or aspects of them). This includes their experiences, knowledge, struggles, achievements, interests, perspectives and aspects of their identity.

- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2023-24 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*)

General:

- **JAM Card (Impact: Disability & Social awareness raising)**

British Council Northern Ireland is a JAM Card friendly organisation (<https://jamcard.org/>) and we are signed up to a second three-year subscription. JAM Card is a discreet device used by people with learning difficulties, disabilities or communication barriers. JAM Card provides the means to identify people with communication barriers and hidden disabilities to give them quality customer care based on their needs. JAM (Just a Minute) Card allows people with learning difficulties, autism and communication barriers to display their card to ask for Just A Minute of patience in customer service situations. By supporting the JAM Card we show that we are supporting people with disabilities and demonstrates our commitment to being an inclusive organisation.

Users can identify and rate their interactions with JAM card friendly organisations using an App. Staff refreshed their online training in how to communicate with JAM Card users - the training included information provision on types of disabilities, real life scenarios of the experiences of JAM card users and quiz style questions. We plan to avail of further advanced disability training through JAM Card in the future.

Marking of International Days:

- **LGBT History month (February 2024)**

To mark LGBT+ History month the latest edition of Five Films for Freedom returned for 2024 and staff joined together to watch a selection of the films followed by a short discussion/reflection.

About Five Films for Freedom

In partnership with BFI Flare: London LGBTIQ+ Film Festival, the British Council makes five LGBTIQ+ themed short films available for the world to watch online for free, over an 11-day period each year. Through our global network in more than 100 countries, we encourage people to watch the films in solidarity with LGBTIQ+ communities particularly in places where freedom and equal rights are limited in recognition of the fact that Love is a Human Right. Running since 2015, the programme has been seen by more than 15 million people. The films have been watched in over 200 countries and principalities, including many parts of the world where homosexuality is criminalised, and in some cases, punishable by the death penalty.

This year's films feature stories from India, Philippines, Spain, USA and the UK. All British Council Northern Ireland staff were invited to come together to watch the films which was followed by a short discussion around the themes of the films and the impact they had on staff.

- **IDAHOT (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia) (17 May 2023)**

Staff were invited to attend events to celebrate International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOBiT) - a global campaign aimed at raising awareness

about the ongoing discrimination, violence, and marginalisation faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people, and all of those with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions, and sex characteristics. The campaign seeks to celebrate diversity and advocate for the rights of people'. This year's theme was: Together always: unity in diversity.

Staff were invited to educate themselves and others about the realities of discrimination faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, and other minority groups. Share stories, challenge stereotypes and prejudice, learn skills to respond to harmful behaviour and discrimination and encourage understanding and respect. Resources were shared including our organisational guide to Promoting Inclusion on sexual orientation, our guide to Transgender and Intersex Inclusion and the United Nation's global campaign against homophobia and transphobia. They were also invited to participate in an online event entitled *Supporting sexual minority employees in the workplace*.

Black History Month (October 2023)

To mark and celebrate this year's theme – Saluting our Sisters – we interviewed six black women colleagues (from different geographies, areas of our work and pay bands) as part of our 'in conversation' EDI discussion series, open to colleagues to join globally. Each woman spoke about themselves, their greatest achievement, and one thing the British Council needs to do differently in their view to improve and to support a more inclusive organisational culture.

Staff were encouraged to share their views on how black women have helped to shape history, made change, strengthened communities and/or contributed to literature, science, business, politics, academia, music, fashion, sport, social and health care, or anything else in society.

Our UK-based Minority Ethnic Working Group colleagues developed activities throughout October including the return of the Black History Month challenge quiz and a session entitled: Intangible heritage, *Carnival* as a community cohesion tool. This session was led by guest speakers from Luton Carnival, UK Centre for Carnival Arts who shared, celebrated and uncovered some of the unknown aspects of Carnival or playing mas, its history and commonalities across the globe as well as how this inclusive and accessible genre is celebrated globally and provides shared heritage experiences that resonates and has the potential to build connections across communities.

- **International Women's Day (8 March 2023)**

In 2024 the United Nations theme was Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress. There were five focus areas for action: investing in women, ending poverty, implementing gender-responsive financing, shifting to a green economy and care society, and supporting feminist change-makers. In March we organised a webinar series to increase the organisational collective knowledge about our work on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls and gender in the arts, education, climate, media, and more.

Date and Time	Session title
---------------	---------------

PART A

Thursday, 7 March 2024	Next Generation What We Know: Women and Girls – Accelerating Progress
Wednesday, 13 March 2024	Addressing Gender Equality through Media
Thursday, 14 March 2024	Investing in Women and Girls Education - British Council's Experience from ASEAN & SSA
Wednesday, 20 March 2024	L&D - CoP Climate Action and Gender Inclusion Cambridge Research Fellows (AM session)
Thursday, 21 March 2024	L&D - CoP Climate Action and Gender Inclusion Cambridge Research Fellows (PM session)
Tuesday, 26 March 2024	Investing in gender equality in the Arts - Nepal's journey
Wednesday, 27 March 2024	Coffee break conversation with SLT about our work with women and girls and gender equality

- **International Day of Disabled People (IDDP) 3 December 2023**

This year staff were invited to attend the following events:

Event date	Title
Tuesday 5 December	Inclusion, neurodiversity and neuromyths in English language teaching classrooms
Wednesday 6 December	Using the Right Words: Inclusive Communication
Thursday 7 December	Promoting inclusion: stammering, active listening and our work – option 1
Tuesday 12 December	Promoting inclusion: stammering, active listening and our work – option 2*

Thursday 14 December	Disability and Carers: Roles Beyond the Workplace
-------------------------	---

The following key areas for action were subsequently set out:

- **Support the retention, attraction and progression** of disabled people.
- Embed EDI in all of our Arts, Education and English programmes, to **make sure we can demonstrate equality outcomes** and our contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Develop an **EDI Learning and Development offer** for Cultural Engagement, including disability awareness training and workshops, to build our capacity.
- Work in partnership with the Diversity Unit, other departments and the disability working group (which is co-led by Cultural Engagement and English and Exams) to **take a strategic approach** to support disability inclusion across the British Council.

- **Global Accessibility Awareness Day (16 May 2024)**

The following webinars took place to mark the day:

1. Introduction to Digital Accessibility

2. Introducing the British Assistive Technology Association

3. Accessibility with our Word and PowerPoint templates

- **Staff Training**

The following additional training sessions were also available to Northern Ireland staff throughout the period:

- **Deep dive session on EDI Monitoring Data (July 2023)**

The session was led by HR Data Insight team and explored the team's demographics, analyzed trends and gaps in representation, highlighting the need for encouraging greater disclosure and removing barriers to progression. It also identified data inconsistencies, and an action has been agreed upon to address this with HR.

- **Awareness Session on Neurodiversity and cognitive disability (July 2023)**

The session on neurodiversity and cognitive disability was conducted in July 2023. The session was led by a British Council staff member, who has a masters degree in Clinical Psychology and member of the British Psychology Society and is also currently doing a diploma in Special Educational Needs. The session covered terminology under the umbrella of neurodiversity, including the difference in UK and US terminology. The session also addressed access barriers that colleagues who are neurodiverse or have cognitive differences may encounter in the workplace. Tips and strategies were provided to make our workplace more cognitively accessible, both digitally and non-digitally. Outcomes of the session included colleagues leaving with more understanding of different types of disability and challenges faced by colleagues and how this impacts

them, methods to better support them in the workplace and an increased awareness and visibility of neurodiversity amongst colleagues. The session was recorded for those who missed it to watch afterwards. We plan to run a survey in 2024/25 to gather more evidence of the impact of this session and main takeaways.

➤ **Awareness session on Disability (Feb 2024)**

A raising awareness session was conducted in February 2024. It focused on an understanding of a broad definition of disability, including hidden disabilities, and workplace barriers faced by disabled people; what needs to happen when disability is disclosed; what support is available within the British Council for anybody with a disability or a learning difficulty such as dyslexia; compliance with UK Equality legislation and promotion of the Disability Inclusion Guide.

Staff gained an increased understanding of broad definition of disability (including neurodivergence) including non-visible forms of disability which may help us bring the non-disclosure rates down. They also gained an increased understanding and confidence in language and etiquette and knowledge of reasonable adjustments and line management responsibility. As a result of the session we addressed data gaps (reducing not given rates in staff monitoring data) and knowledge gaps: around disability discrimination, UK legislation.

We plan to run a survey in 2024/25 to assess the impact of the session and main takeaways.

➤ **Awareness session on the use of EDI Planning tools (Jan 2024)**

Our range of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) planning tools help mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion. They are designed to be used during planning so that any steps required to minimise negative impact and promote opportunities to support inclusion are taken before policies, procedures, programmes, projects, events or other activity are delivered.

There are four tools available for use:

- Equality Screening and Impact Assessment (ESIA) - for policies, processes and new ways of working
- Guide to Mainstreaming - to support planning the development and delivery of programmes, projects or large activities
- Questions Tool - to support the planning of inclusive activities and events
- EDI Emergency Planning Tool - to inform decision-making during exceptional situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic and other emergency contexts

Due to multiple staff changes in the teams, the level of familiarity with the EDI planning tools varied among colleagues. Recent audits have emphasized the need for a refresher training session on EDI planning tools. The session was conducted in January 2024 by a British Council Accredited Diversity Facilitator and Senior Equality Diversity Inclusion Project Lead and included an overview of the EDI planning tools, understanding why we need them, how/when to use the tools as well as provided space to clarify any specific questions and share reflections.

As a result of the training:

Staff received a bespoke explanation of the importance of using EDI planning tools for our work and the positive impact this generates in the organisation and how teams can use these tools in their roles

PART A

Staff have a better understanding of the requirements and timelines for completing ESIA and Questions Tools.

Arts and Education managers are aware of the requirements and timelines for completing the Guide to Mainstreaming into Programmes work.

There has been an improvement in the quality of completion of EDI planning tools which will lead to more meaningful insights for the team's work.

To assess impact, we will use baseline/ statistics to monitor progress in the completion of these tools.

We have already noted an increased understanding in using EDI planning tools amongst colleagues following the refresher training as all planning tools completed after the training have passed the audit.

➤ **An Introduction to Anti-Black Racism: Exploring Barriers to Progression (March 2024)**

The session was conducted in March 2024 by two Accredited Diversity Facilitators. It included an introduction to anti-black racism exploring its roots and how it is maintained as well as what is needed to disrupt and dismantle it. A practical focus included an examination of trends related to recruitment and progression for black colleagues/ underrepresented groups.

Staff received information on:

- Anti-Black Racism and exploring equality targets for Black staff in the UK
- formally recognising that race is a significant determinant of advantage and disadvantage by exploring approaches in recruitment and/ promotion.
- increasing understanding and engagement with the area of race using our Race Equality through Anti-Racism Guide to support us.
- identifying actions to dismantle racism as individuals and collectively.

A survey is planned to be conducted in 2024/25 to assess the impact of the session and main takeaways.

➤ **Anti-slavery walking tour**

Northern Ireland colleagues took part in an anti-slavery walking tour in Belfast to explore the lesser-known history of Belfast's complicity in the transatlantic slave trade and the city's valiant role as a hotspot of abolitionist activism from the late 18th century to the mid-Victorian era. As a result of the tour, staff gained an understanding of the broad story of Belfast's involvement with slavery and the wider historical, socio-economic and global context, as well as the role of Belfast's leading families in the eighteenth century who profited from slave trade but how their descendants would become leading Belfast activists for the abolition of the trade and institution of slavery.

Several staff mentioned that they had developed a much better understanding of Northern Ireland's involvement in slavery and were more confident in calling themselves anti-slavery allies. The tour was part of the Belfast International Film Festival and led by a local historian on their behalf.

➤ **EDI Conference: Cultivate, Connect & Create on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Derry Playhouse**

Some Northern Ireland staff attended the event which explored the impact of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the arts, culture and community including cultivating and celebrating diverse talent and nurturing inclusive leadership. This was the first in a series of events exploring the impact of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and was hosted by The Playhouse, Londonderry and designed and delivered by an anti-racism educator, social activist and sustainability focused content creator. As a result of the training, staff gained an understanding of the challenges faced by disabled and minority ethnic groups in the arts and culture sectors in Northern Ireland and received valuable insight into how to embed truly inclusive leadership practices in the workplace.

➤ **Frederick Douglass Week, Belfast**

The Country Director NI met with US organiser of inaugural Belfast Frederick Douglas Festival which was followed up with promotion of the programme across Northern Ireland staff and advocacy in staff meetings. Some staff participated in events across the week-long programme. Douglass Week is a collaborative event series celebrating the work and life of Frederick Douglass in different countries around the world. The week is organized by The Globe Lane Initiative (a nonprofit organization inspired by Douglass) in partnership with a wide network of Douglass scholars, historians and researchers, along with artists, musicians, poets, community groups and activists from around the world. The staff who participated in the various events learned about the story of Douglass and other changemakers through historical, creative, academic, cultural and other lenses. They are now able to describe the influence of history on contemporary topics and conversations and took part in discussions and debates addressing the history and impact of Douglass in Northern Ireland and his lasting legacy. Staff who also attended the earlier anti-slavery walking tour further enhanced their understanding of Belfast's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade and the inspiring role of anti-slavery campaigners such as Frederick Douglass who ensured Belfast never profited from the trade in the same way as other UK cities.

➤ **Global SEAH (Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment) webinars**

As part of Safeguarding week in November, the Global Safeguarding Team facilitated organisation-wide awareness raising sessions on the topics of SEAH and Violence against women and Girls to coincide with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls.

SEAH and gender-based violence remain pervasive issues globally, disproportionately affecting women with 1 in 3 women experiencing gender-based violence during their lifetime (WHO). This is also a concern for workspaces as the International Labour Organization reports that 6.3% of people have faced sexual violence and harassment at work, with women being particularly exposed.

SEAH targeted upskilling sessions were delivered to 3 countries. SEAH and gender-based violence is one of the most pressing safeguarding issues in the Americas.

● **Violence against Women and Girls/SEAH Panel Discussion**

The Global Head of Safeguarding joined a panel discussion hosted by the Gender and Inclusion team to commemorate 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) has devastating short- and long-term consequences for women and girls not only impacting them but can have wide-reaching consequences for their families and communities. VAWG and SEAH disproportionately affects women, minorities and marginalised groups 45% of women reported that they or a

woman they know has experienced a form of Violence Against Women and Girls. (UN Women 2021)

External Monitoring

We have been conducting equality monitoring of participants in Northern Ireland based programmes across the 9 protected characteristics since 2016. This exercise goes beyond our legal monitoring requirements under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and in doing so we demonstrate our commitment to understanding of the level of diversity of programme participants and to taking action to address under-representation to ensure our programmes are as inclusive as possible. A link to the monitoring form is sent by the programme team at application stage or at the point of the participant being approved and receiving a grant agreement from us. We collate results and benchmark them against NI census data.

Results this year showed an over-representation of females, and young, unmarried participants without dependents. Participants are mainly white and heterosexual (although in line with national averages), and we continue to see an over-representation of grammar schools and participants from a Roman Catholic community background. Results were presented to the Study USA Steering Committee and Northern Ireland Advisory Committee to demonstrate our commitment to diversifying our programmes and to obtain feedback on possible further action to ensure inclusivity of our programmes.

An increase in diversity of our programme participants as a result of concrete actions has proven our commitment to providing equality of opportunity across the nine protected characteristics and an inclusive approach to programming. A more diverse cohort of participants has helped promote good relations between participants from differing religious belief, political opinions, racial groups and sexual orientations and inclusion of participants with disabilities (including hidden disabilities) has helped create a sense of tolerance and acceptance. In the coming year, we will expand the data capture to include social disadvantage by measuring the number of participants who have been eligible for free school meals.

We will continue to implement specific actions to increase the diversity of applicants to our programmes, specifically within the Study USA programme. These include:

- Expanding the range of disciplines beyond Business/STEM in line with the Department for the Economy's 10x strategy.
- Using case studies and role models from minority groups to promote the programme.
- Reviewing our promotional literature and application processes to ensure inclusivity.
- Promoting our EDI values at events and encourage applications from under-represented groups.
- Targeted promotion via EDI networks at NI institutions and targeting eligible institutions with no applicants in 2023.
- Ensuring a gender balance on all interview panels

The Northern Ireland team continues to liaise with wider British Council departments, offering advice and support to monitoring exercises for programmes within their teams.

Internal Monitoring

PART A

The Global Network Group (of which several Northern Ireland staff are part) post-Transformation EDI data review was completed in May 2023.

Informed by a data-led approach to equality monitoring, we sought to address under-representation and enhance the inclusion of minority ethnic staff and disabled people in our team, particularly, but not only, at leadership levels, in line with the corporate EDI strategy and Anti-Racism Action Plan. As well as minority ethnic and disability, we were also committed to increasing female representation at senior levels across the team. We aim to nurture an inclusive culture where people working in and engaging with the team feel respected and comfortable being themselves, and to provide opportunities for under-represented groups to participate and contribute to informing and shaping our organisational culture as a whole.

Compared to Q2 (2023) data results, in 2024 we no longer observe female under-representation at the senior levels, which is a positive trend. Female representation at SMP level for International Operations UK has increased to 60%, which is above corporate target of 50%. Female representation at SMP+ (incl. LMFG) is at 53%. The data no longer reflects minority ethnic representation and indicates a drop in disability representation within the team in comparison to 2021 data. This may be due to the <5 anonymity rule applied on MyHR, which would affect the IO statistics given the small size of the team. However, there is a slight increase in disability representation compared to 2023 data, rising from 4% in 2023 to 6.7% in 2024. Minority ethnic representation at SMP level is 5%. Given the significant demographic changes post-Transformation, we will continue to make efforts to reduce non-disclosure rates and address minority ethnic and disability under-representation.

In terms of requests for reasonable adjustments, several students participating in our programmes declared a disability or medical condition. These were accounted for when making matching decisions and students were matched to colleges which could accommodate these requests. At interview stage we provided reasonable adjustments for a student with autism. We also covered the cost of single room accommodation for a student with a mental health condition while in the US. Thirdly we provided adjustments to allow a student to access specific medication through the US college campus nurse.

Northern Ireland Advisory Committee: We informed the committee of our published set of KPIs and target representation on our committees with the Board of Trustee and Global Leadership Team. Committee Chairs in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales convened a meeting to discuss how these ambitions would be achieved. Also discussed was the creation of opportunities for career development and a reduction in gender gap at senior levels within the GNT team. As an example of our commitment to increasing the diversity of our programme participation, the Committee was presented with monitoring data relating to the latest application round of the Study USA programme, benchmarked with census and HE/FE enrolment data. This monitoring exercise is routinely carried out for all participants in our Northern Ireland based programmes to help us identify under-representation and develop strategies to widen participation.

ARTS:

Outburst Queer Arts Festival 10-18 November

Outburst Queer Arts Festival took place in November 2023 with a LGBTQIA+ Arts delegation from South Africa, Nepal, Turkey and EU Europe. Info available here: <https://outburstarts.com/festival/>. We actively promote the festival across our social

PART A

media channels and CD and Head of Arts attend many of the events. We are advocates for the festival and where possible support raising awareness of it through our global networks.

The festival included a series of curated conversations about queer arts practice, development and international collaboration in a festival context that offers a space for a multiplicity of creativity and freedom of expression. This helped gain an understanding of each other's work, experiences and ideas. We also worked with the Festival team to bring international queer artists and curators to the festival to build international capacity in the sector.

As a direct result of the festival the following outcomes were achieved:

- 1) Belfast Ensemble and Outburst in our BC UK/France Season coming up in July and a result of our British Council Bespoke Brokers connections - over last 2 years with EU Queer Arts Professionals coming to Outburst
- 2) Bespoke Brokers is now an annual EU delegation generating new work and connections <https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/europe/bespoke-brokers>
- 3) Artistic Director Outburst has been working in Nepal sharing her best practice in Queer Arts with organisations and artists in the sector in Nepal. Ruth also took part in Women of the World, WOW Turkey in March as a result of Turkey delegation who were in attendance at the 2023 festival.
- 4) Glasgow Women's Library will be coming to Belfast in November as a result of WOW and a new connection / collaboration has been formed with Outburst around Queer Archives and Literature connections.

EDUCATION:

Language Trends Northern Ireland

Following on from the provision of sign language training, we made changes to our Language Trends NI research. Language Trends Northern Ireland surveys schools anonymously on their languages provision and has run in England since 2003 and in Wales since 2015. This is the third time the research has been conducted in Northern Ireland, following on from our inaugural report in 2019. This year we included sign language alongside other languages within a question on which languages were taught in NI schools. This is important in raising awareness of sign language's status as a language by including a question in the survey. Every post-primary school in NI was sent a copy of the survey and demonstrates our public commitment to EDI as an organisation. We also followed up with our Sign trainer to inform him that we had acted on the discussion in our BSL training regarding awareness raising of sign language as a language. Although the New Decade New Approach deal of 2020 committed to introducing a Sign Language Bill, this has not yet materialised and sign language is not a mandatory part of the school curriculum. However, results showed that 10.3% of schools in Northern Ireland provide sign language as an extra-curricular study option.

Link to the Language Trends NI report: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-reports/language-trends-ni-2023>

English Programmes

We ensured that all marketing toolkits include ALT text and provide a range of diverse images for global staff to use across their social media channels

We verified that all pdf outputs align with the Adobe PDF accessibility checker including within this report <https://teachingenglish.britishcouncil.org/teachers-with-disabilities-research>

Peace Plus

Over the past year the British Council Northern Ireland have been working on an EU Peace Plus proposal with British Council Ireland, Politics in Action (Northern Ireland), Create (Ireland) and with the support of Arts Council Ireland and Arts Council Northern Ireland.

If successful, the “Connect” project will be led by the British Council Northern Ireland, be delivered over four years, and will directly benefit 3,464 individuals. The project will target those from different community backgrounds placing an emphasis on supporting women, older people, minority communities, those living with disabilities, those from the LGBTQI+ community as well as those living with the legacy of the conflict.

The project aligns with British Council’s ambition for a more peaceful and prosperous world built on trust and uses a cultural relations approach to dealing with conflict and building peace. An extensive mapping exercise to identify target groups within the community and voluntary sector has been carried out by the British Council. If successful, British Council Northern Ireland, will monitor, review and report on compliance with Section 75 of the NI Act (1998).

Social Cohesion Workshop

Twenty-two British Council staff from the global non-formal education/youth team met in Belfast on 12-14 March 2024. The group were in Belfast to develop the British Council’s global social cohesion policy, which will inform work in this area going forward. The team were comprised of practitioners and overseas directors from the EU Region, UK, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and Middle East and North Africa (MENA). This was an important internal stakeholder group for the British Council Northern Ireland enabling them to build Northern Ireland experience into British Council global policy. Having the team in Belfast also gave them the opportunity to hear about the work going on in the community which is tackling division and aiming to build a more cohesive society.

The team met with key stakeholders including, the Director of Good Relations, the Executive Office, Good Relations Officer, Belfast City Council, and a number of community activists. They visited Falls Community Council and R-City, a community relations project at the Houben Centre in Belfast as well enjoying a political tour of the city. On one evening the group attended a book reading with Brian Rowan an ex-BBC journalist who discussed building trust from the perspective of a journalist – trust of people, terrorists, politicians, and information, and what happens when it breaks down.

Our Chair delivered a session on Policy to Practice, which gave an insight into her personal experience of working in Northern Ireland, developing good models of social cohesion at the intersection of where policy meets practice.

Following on from this visit, a delegation from the Baltics is now coming to Belfast in September 2024 during Good Relations Week. This visit will be for experts who are

designing and implementing social cohesion strategies and programmes in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

British Council EU/UK Stronger Together Project

- (1) In November 2023 as part of the British Council EU/UK Stronger Together Project, thirty students from Ireland and Northern Ireland worked together for one week to produce a series of short films. In partnership with the Nerve Centre and the North West Regional College, a five-day workshop in Derry- Londonderry enabled Media, Journalism and Performing Arts students to participate in an intensive production programme, mentored by media industry professionals. One of the films produced was [The Secret](#) This film explored what young people from different communities from across the north west cross border region knew about the troubles and how connected they feel to what happened.
- (2) In February 2024 as part of the British Council EU/UK Youth Stronger Together programme a number of young people and their teachers from Northern Ireland took part in a virtual event to hear experts speak about the complexities and challenges that refugee students face. The students found out how they could support refugee students integrate into their school community.

Language Assistants Programme

The language assistants team has updated their English Language Assistant application form to ask for further clarification on minority backgrounds and disabilities. This data is useful during the allocation process and for the programme to see if we are as inclusive as we can be and to highlight areas that may need help with marketing in certain minority backgrounds.

The Modern Language Assistants side of the programme now also asks all Language Assistants to declare if they have any additional requirements or disabilities that they believe we should be aware of. The reason for this being that our partner organisations do not always ask in their application form for Modern Language Assistants if they have any additional requirements.

Lastly the EDI team in the language assistants programme are preparing mental health guidance docs for all of our destination countries. Two members of the language assistant team have also become Mental Health First Aiders.

Other initiatives:

- **Mentoring scheme**

This year we introduced a mentoring scheme, the purpose of which is to foster:

- support frameworks for longer-term career development
- an environment of ongoing professional exchange, so you can acquire new skills and share skills that you have
- a stronger culture of cross-team collaboration, modelling One British Council

- stronger organisational networks and career pathways.

- **Leadership Team Rotational Membership**

We continue to run a new pilot initiative to increase diversity and inclusion in the UK & External Relations Leadership Team and support the British Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. This was in relation to specific objectives of addressing under-representation and improve inclusion in our team by allowing UK & External Relations colleagues across all pay bands, the opportunity to join UK & ER leadership team on rotational 3 months basis. Membership involved attendance at weekly meetings and contribution to decision-making processes.

- **Wellbeing Surgery Sessions**

These sessions with our UK Director are designed for people across the team to talk about whatever is on their mind, things that are proving particularly challenging or any other issues that they want to raise.

3 Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2023-24 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

Yes No (go to Q4) Not applicable (go to Q4)

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 2023-24 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- X No, has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The job descriptions and person specifications for advertised vacancies contain a statement of British Council Northern Ireland's commitment to its equal opportunity and good relations obligations under Section 75.

The following text appears in the role profile of all advertised vacancies: -

OUR EQUALITY COMMITMENT:

Valuing diversity is essential to the British Council's work. We aim to abide by and promote equality legislation by following both the letter and the spirit of it to try and avoid unjustified discrimination, recognising discrimination as a barrier to equality of opportunity, inclusion and human rights.

As an Equal Opportunities Employer, all job applicants are required to complete an Equal Opportunity and Diversity Monitoring Form. Provision of this information is voluntary and assists the British Council in its commitment to a policy of equal opportunity and the development of positive policies to promote equal opportunity in employment. The British Council welcomes applications from all sections of the community as we believe that a diverse workforce gives added depth to our work. We aim to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the basis of gender including transgender, marital status or civil partnership, sexual identity, religion and belief, political opinion, race, colour, nationality or ethnic origin, work pattern, age, disability or HIV/AIDS status, socio-economic background, spent convictions, trade union activity or membership, on the basis of having or not having dependants, or any other irrelevant grounds.

The British Council monitors all stages of our recruitment and selection process to ensure there is no potential for unjustified discrimination on irrelevant grounds. Our monitoring data is externally analysed each year, and recommendations are published and acted upon. All information supplied is treated in strict confidence and no identifying details are attached to it. It helps us to monitor and evaluate the success

and application of our equal opportunity policy and diversity strategy and to compile anonymised statistics which are included within our formal reporting structures.

A specific requirement relating to Community Background is requested within the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Monitoring Form for applicants applying for posts that have the potential to be based in the Northern Ireland office whereby applicants are encouraged to declare their Community Background, regardless of which location they are applying from. We monitor the Community Background of our job applicants and employees in order to demonstrate our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity in employment and to comply with our duties under the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998.

An additional section is attached to the British Council application form for internal and external vacancies. This section states that the British Council operates a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria for a vacancy. All disabled applicants are asked to confirm whether reasonable adjustments are required (and to specify the nature of those adjustments) at application stage.

The British Council has a Core Skills dictionary which sets out the skills which are required most often in roles throughout the British Council. They include a requirement for team leaders to coordinate a diverse team with awareness of equality and diversity impact as part of project specifications. The Dictionary also specifies that in all communications with internal and external audiences, staff must demonstrate an awareness of a diverse audience in speaking and writing.

All staff worldwide are required to ensure their behaviour is consistent with our policies.

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2023-24 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Senior Managers' leadership role is critical to embedding our EDI principles by becoming involved in diversity initiatives and projects. They ensure that Equality Impact Assessments of key policies, programmes and services are carried out as required. In general, senior managers champion EDI, promote the merits of a good work-life balance and initiate activities to back this up. SLT must have an EDI deliverable in the performance plans.

All staff are also encouraged to dedicate a performance management objective to Equality Diversity and Inclusion and spend time thinking about what EDI means to them, their experiences and how they can improve their knowledge of EDI as well as

how to put this into practice in the workplace. Staff are also encouraged to commit time to looking in detail on the intranet at our EDI Policy, Diversity Strategy and the British Council's approach to equality and diversity as well as discrimination legislation.

Marketing and Communications staff play a pivotal role in communicating our EDI commitment to our audiences by ensuring all images used in communications reflect diversity. They also must ensure access to our communications for disabled people and speakers of minority languages and implement changes to address inequalities.

Facilities staff must create the environment in which all customers and colleagues can feel safe and secure by ensuring all refurbishment projects incorporate communication of a clear message of inclusion and accessibility to a wide range of people, for example, disabled people and people with young children. In the Northern Ireland office, Disability Action have supported us in addressing access issues and ensuring personal evacuation plans are in place for anyone who might need additional support in the event of an emergency.

The British Council Disability Working Group comprises of seven staff from across the UK who give 5% of their time to the group. They meet about six times a year and help us to take forward the disability related action points in our Integrated Equality Scheme and to generally keep disability on the corporate agenda.

Programme staff ensure that every participant attending our events feel welcomed and valued by checking all venues for accessibility issues. We also ensure that equality monitoring data (as a minimum in the areas of gender and age) for customers is carried out to identify under- and over-represented groups and results are discussed and acted upon in relation to the local context and local demographics. Programme staff also provide catering at all events that meets the diversity of participants.

For all Northern Ireland staff, if they have a particular examples of how they have promoted equal opportunities and good relations in an aspect of their work, this is championed throughout the Northern Ireland office and fed to our UK Diversity Team.

6 In the 2023-24 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? (*tick all that apply*)

Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan

Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning

Yes, in some departments/jobs

No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's ongoing corporate plan

No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2023-24 report

Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The British Council values are aligned with our vision, purpose, strategic pillars and offers. Our values help us create the culture we need to deliver effectively.

The British Council's three corporate values are at the heart of what we do and how we work. They are: 1) We are open and committed: Our belief in what we do translates into a deep and long-term commitment to the people we work with and the places where we work. We tackle challenges and take responsibility with openness and honesty to bring about positive change 2) We are expert and inclusive: Inclusion is at the heart of everything we do. By involving everyone in the conversation we learn from each other and bring together all of our experience, knowledge and expertise to do the best work that we can. 3) We are optimistic and bold: We believe in the potential of young people to create a better world. Inspired by this optimism, we are positive and creative, and we focus on what works. We are not afraid to make bold choices to shape a better future for everyone.

The British Council's [Corporate Plan](#) outlines the organisation's commitment to continue to enable the people of the UK to share their culture and way of life with over 600 million people and partners throughout the world, through the programme areas of Arts, Cultural Engagement, and English. Promoting equality of opportunity and good relations is integrated into this intention. We set diversity targets in our Corporate Plan through the Diversity Assessment Framework (DAF). The UK DAF target for 2023/4 was four out of six.

We run mentoring programmes for women and have taken steps towards more flexible deployment to help colleagues appointed locally to develop and progress into more senior roles.

We have adopted more flexible deployment to broaden opportunities for locally appointed staff and maximise the diversity of our workforce.

EDI is mainstreamed into our Northern Ireland Country Plan. The Annual Corporate Plan outlines targets, successes to date and proposed outcomes against targets.

We contribute to the UK government's commitment to international development support for stability, economic development, reduced inequalities and good governance in developing, fragile and conflict-affected countries around the world, including those vital to the UK's strategic interests.

In arts we promote our innovative digital offer including the continued development of unique digital projects using our disability arts and diversity expertise.

Equality action plans/measures

7 Within the 2023-24 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

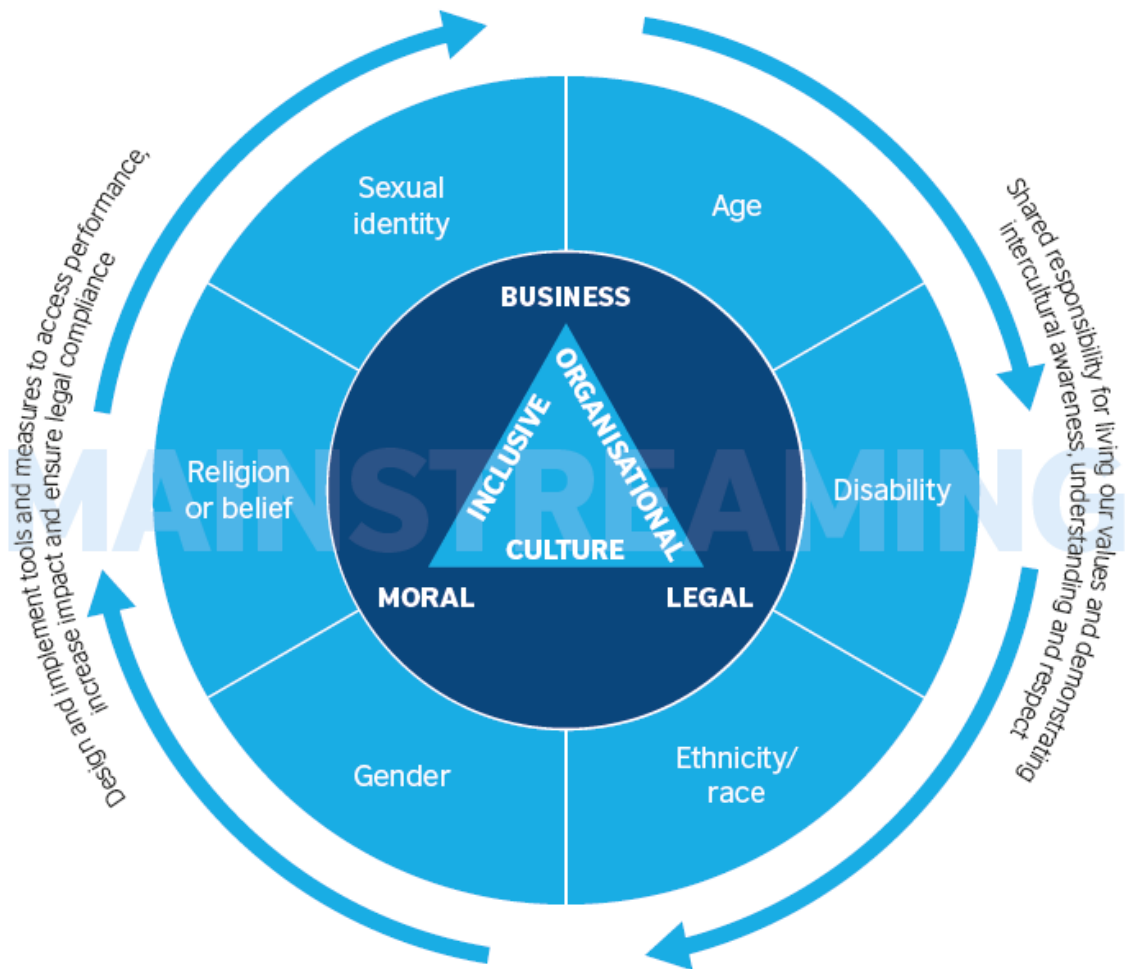
Actions completed:	<input type="text"/>	Actions ongoing:	<input type="text" value="11"/>	Actions to commence:	<input type="text"/>
--------------------	----------------------	------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------	----------------------

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

- 1) Ensure Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is mainstreamed into our current practices (ongoing)**

- Celebration of key diversity days throughout the year
- A document entitled “Building EDI into your work” is used by all staff to integrate EDI into everyday work, split by job type. See appendices.
- EDI Planning Tools: A “Guide to Mainstreaming Equality and Diversity in Project Development and Delivery” is used by all staff. This is a checklist for staff to use as guidance about how to mainstream equality and diversity principles and issues into the development, delivery and review of programme work in a more systematic and comprehensive way (see appendices)
- EDI Planning tools: For smaller one-off events, we use the checklist entitled “Questions to Support Inclusive Activities” (see appendices)
- EDI is further mainstreamed into event management using an accessibility checklist (see Appendices). All venues for British Council events are checked for accessibility and related services. The British Council policy clearly mandates they will react to specific needs which includes those requiring or requesting Personal Readers, Infra-red or induction loops, Guiders, Braille, Lip Speakers, Temporary wheelchair access lifts, and Sign Language Interpreter. In addition, there is an anticipatory duty across the following categories: Mobility, Hearing impairment, Visual impairment, Learning disabilities and difficulties, mental health and severe disfigurement. Consideration is made for religious or cultural request such as the availability of rooms for prayer and special dietary needs.
- Brand guidelines ensure documents and formats are fully accessible.
- Staff are encouraged to have an EDI objective in their performance portfolios (this has become mandatory for SLT) and a bank of example deliverables has been circulated to all Northern Ireland staff together with a self-assessment checklist
- Ongoing EDI training is rolled out annually
- Screening of all new or significantly amended policies and case studies are circulated
- Web accessibility guidelines in use: [Web Accessibility Guidelines](#)
- An EDI checklist for Northern Ireland staff captures all routine EDI related activity to adhere to in all aspects of staff’s work.
- An induction document for new starters focuses on all aspects of EDI.
- Staff refer regularly to our Equality Policy which contains useful resources across all EDI categories (see appendices).

Our mainstreaming chart which forms part of our EDI strategy is as follows:



2) Monitor data and data accuracy across all protected characteristics for staff within British Council Northern Ireland (ongoing)

The British Council's global people data system **MyHR** is a centralised, global database for all of our HR information and includes instant access to accurate and up-to-date information supported by simplified and standardised processes. MyHR also gives us a clear picture of our global workforce and ensure all our HR work is delivered in a secure, compliant and risk-controlled manner. The new system enables users to:

- access, update and manage personal data securely
- book and manage leave easily
- search for colleagues, see the organisational structure and access accurate, up-to-date data in real time
- access the Employee Service Centre (AskHR) for HR advice and system issues
- receive timely automated reminders and guidance relating to specific global processes
- any time access via the MyHR mobile app

Steps are continually taken to encourage staff to complete their personal data on the myHR system via a series of email reminders. Improvements were made to the system as a whole for assessing equality monitoring data for staff across all job bands.

This has ensured that equality monitoring data is appropriately collected, kept up to date with as much consistency as possible, held as confidential sensitive data, and easily retrieved in a format for reporting purposes. We will continue to encourage staff to update this data on an ongoing basis.

NOTE: The MyHR database does NOT contain data on community background for Northern Ireland staff. Community background data is requested on an adhoc basis from our HR department and stored securely in a protected file. Only the Equality Manager has access to this data and therefore staff are unable to view or change this data.

3) Improve communication on EDI updates, news and best practice to all British Council Northern Ireland staff (ongoing)

A dedicated Equality Manager in the Northern Ireland office communicates with staff to increase awareness of EDI issues. Staff are kept up to date with key EDI issues and dates on an ongoing basis mainly via the physical EDI Toolkit and electronically via the EDI specific Microsoft Teams page for colleagues in the Northern Ireland office. The Teams folder contains all corporate and Northern Ireland specific EDI documents. There is also a range of documents on event management and ideas on how to mainstream EDI into everyday work. There is also a section on useful resources including accessibility guides for venues across Northern Ireland, links to interfaith calendars and international diversity days, lists of nearby places of worship for staff and visitors, and links to EDI training courses. This is a very useful tool and helps keep all important EDI documents in one accessible place. The Teams folder will continue to be updated on an ad hoc basis.

The Equality Manager sits on two wider EDI working groups across the UK to exchange information and ideas on how to embed EDI into working practices.

Colleagues subscribing to the British Council global EDI mailbase are kept informed of ongoing issues and there are staff Bulletin notices and global staff talks around a range of EDI topics throughout the year. Further communication and training schedules are planned in 2024-25.

EDI has become a routine item at monthly all-staff meetings in the Northern Ireland office at which time staff are provided with a monthly update of equality related issues.

4) Revise EDI training plan for all British Council Northern Ireland staff (ongoing)

Aside from the various EDI related webinars throughout the year, virtual Teams training sessions took place in the Northern Ireland office this year (see Q2 for more details).

The training plan is being revised for 2024-25 which will include a mixture of virtual and face-to-face training activity.

5) Reasonable Adjustments - record and monitor annual data on number of reasonable adjustment requests received and actioned (internally and externally). Remain vigilant of issues affecting disabled staff and customers and ensure an accessible environment (ongoing)

Staff are encouraged to use the corporate Accessibility checklists when planning small and large scale events.

We regularly use a Reasonable Adjustments log for staff to log all reasonable adjustments requests, either internally from staff or externally from programme or events participants. This acts as a reference point for staff to ensure consistency in our approach to providing reasonable adjustments and cost implications thereof.

We have a formal global Reasonable Adjustments Policy for staff with disabilities.

We continue to ensure all external communication is as accessible as possible. The Northern Ireland website is built for accessibility and usability with a clear visual hierarchy – making it easy for the user to navigate through the website content - this includes making text readable and understandable and having content appear and operate in predictable ways. We use good font size and colour contrast combinations, which is helpful for users with colour-blindness and other visual impairments and have included captions and alternatives for our audio and visual content, for those with hearing/vision difficulties.

We use inclusive language throughout the website – for example, we use ‘people first’ language which keeps the individual as the most essential element. Characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, religion, racial group or ability are only used when relevant. We avoid idioms, jargons, and acronyms: which can exclude people who may not have specialised knowledge of a particular subject and impede effective communication as a result. An accessible language guide is available for all staff.

We have collated and disseminated a range of Accessibility Guides to staff to ensure all documentation and online activity is as inclusive as possible. We ensure all staff are aware of and adhere to [Web Accessibility Guidelines](#)

We also have a webpage dedicated to visitors to British Council Northern Ireland who may have accessibility needs - <https://nireland.britishcouncil.org/about/access-british-council-northern-ireland>. We also hope to develop a dedicated EDI webpage on the British Council Northern Ireland website to showcase our EDI activity and our commitment to EDI.

6) Action to help make progress towards the protected characteristics targets, particularly in senior management (ongoing)

We run coaching and mentoring programmes for **women** and have a corporate target of 50% female representation at senior leadership level.

As a means of increasing the number of disabled staff across the organisation, recruitment teams have specifically addressed the issue of broadening access to those with disability by establishing contracts with specialist diversity recruiters (such as Employability, Equal Approach, Diversity Jobs) using accredited diverse talent specialists, working across a range of diverse strands including; Disability, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race, Religion, Generational, Transgender, Obesity, Education, Class, Working Parents and Carers. This has broadened access not only to those with disability but groups across the range of protected characteristics. In line with the British Council EDI strategy these efforts shall continue until targets have been met to address areas of under representation and remove any possible barriers to equality of opportunity. By respecting and valuing diversity we are more likely to attract talent and fresh perspectives, nurture creativity, innovation and flexibility and new

opportunities and sources of support, so we remain relevant and dynamic and achieve greater reach and impact.

All staff are encouraged to declare their disability on the online HR portal and as a result there has been an increase in the response rate and a reduction in the number of staff choosing the 'Prefer not to Say' option.

When advertising for vacancies, British Council recruitment processes ensure reasonable adjustment is actioned for candidates with disability or special needs. We also display the 'positive about disabled people' logo on all recruitment advertisements and our web pages, and offer a guaranteed interview to all disabled applicants meeting our recruitment criteria.

We also consider opportunities for disabled people to work for the British Council Northern Ireland for example through work experience or internship programmes. We are seeking to find ways to roll this out locally in consultation with Disability Action NI. The corporate target of disabled staff is 7%.

In terms of ethnicity, we have an updated Anti-racism action plan. Our Anti-Racism hub contains a wealth of Anti-Racism and Black Lives Matter Resources.

Our anti-racism vision is for the organisation to become anti-racist in its culture and in its practices. We will strive to give colleagues and everyone we engage with the opportunity to achieve their potential, regardless of race, ethnicity or background. We will aim to dismantle barriers across our organisation and build a more inclusive and representative workplace and leadership that embraces diversity, calls out discrimination and puts equality at its heart. Our priorities are as follows:

1. Improving our learning and understanding about racism/s and its impact
2. Supporting a more inclusive organisational culture that prioritises anti-racist actions and behaviours, leadership development, and improved ways of listening to and acting on colleagues' feedback and concerns
3. Human resource (HR) policies and practices that are reviewed, revised and undergo equality screening and impact assessment (ESIA)to ensure they promote inclusion and anti-racist principles
4. A greater diversity of nationality and race in our global leadership
5. Programmes, products and services that are deliberately anti-racist and inclusive in their development and delivery, consistent with our commitment to decolonise our work.

Within the Northern Ireland office specifically, we seek ways to increase the percentage of ethnic minority staff which is currently low (although reflective of the low percentage in the local population) but this is a group which we target when recruiting. We have created a recruitment network list which is a list of relevant organisations across all the protected characteristics which we will target when recruitment opportunities are advertised as a way of ensuring that our pool of candidates is as diverse as possible.

The age profile of staff will continue to be regularly monitored to ensure there are no barriers to staff in the 51+ age group.

7) External Monitoring – monitoring of customers from the protected characteristic groups taking active part in programmes and activities offered by the British Council Northern Ireland (ongoing)

A questionnaire covering all section 75 protected groups is sent to all external customers across a number of programmes. The data is recorded on a central spreadsheet and patterns and trends identified. Some underrepresentation was identified among boys, with a higher uptake of girls participating in many of our programmes, thus presenting an opportunity for us to target boys. We have also seen a greater participation rate in our education programmes amongst grammar schools over secondary schools which we will find ways to address. We will continue to monitor our customers throughout 2024-25 and will address any underrepresentation as it arises. We will continue to take action to increase participation among the following target groups:

- Males/non-binary/boys schools
- Older participants, married with dependents
- Mix of religious belief and ethnic origin
- Participants with disabilities
- Protestant community background/non-Catholic maintained schools
- Non-heterosexual participants
- Secondary schools

8) Recruitment and induction – encourage job applications from a diverse audience and an understanding of EDI from the outset (ongoing)

The Disability Advisory Forum offers a recruitment audit service that assesses the accessibility recruitment processes and procedures offering support and guidance where needs have been identified. This is also an avenue which should be further explored and disseminated to staff. As part of the general HR process, all line managers are required to perform exit interviews on all staff who leave the organisation. This highlights any EDI related issues that may be raised and action taken.

All new staff, both permanent and temporary receive comprehensive induction training which includes an explanation of duties/responsibilities as they apply under Section 75. All new staff are given a copy of our Equality Scheme and EDI training is carried out during induction process as part of the general HR procedures. All new staff are also given a copy of the booklet “Welcome to the British Council” which contains full information on our EDI Policy.

We will seek to establish contact with specialist diversity recruiters in Northern Ireland using accredited diverse talent specialists, working across a range of diverse strands including; Disability, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race, Religion, Generational, Transgender, Obesity, Education, Class, Working Parents and Carers. This will broaden access not only to those with disability but groups across the range of protected characteristics.

9) Inclusive Procurement - ensure all suppliers are aware of our EDI policy and they too have similar policies. Ensure the diversity clause appears in the main body of contracts. (ongoing)

In addition to building in reference to diversity to the supply of contracted goods and services across the reporting period, the British Council's standard contract template has been commissioned and overseen by the Legal team. The team has ensured that the contract includes specific reference to Equality Legislation and the British Council's own policies - including a link to our Policies website, which includes the Equality Policy. This template is used by colleagues across the organisation for procurement of goods and services. The template itself can be found on the Contracts Portal, with a copy uploaded to the departmental EDI SharePoint site for ease of reference.

The two specific clauses are:

"British Council Requirements" means the instructions, requirements, policies, codes of conduct, guidelines, forms and other documents notified to the Partner in writing or set out on the British Council's website at [Policies for Consultants](#) or such other web address as may be notified to the Partner from time to time (as such documents may be amended, updated or supplemented from time to time during the Term);"

"Equality Legislation" means any and all legislation, applicable guidance and statutory codes of practice relating to diversity, equality, non-discrimination and human rights as may be in force from time to time in England and Wales or in any other territory in which, or in respect of which, the Partner performs its obligations in this Agreement;"

The Equality Manger is part of a wider EDI working group to look at the inclusivity of our procurement processes and how they can be improved.

10) External promotion of British Council EDI strategy externally to stakeholders (customers, audiences, students, candidates, alumni, partners, programme participants, etc) (ongoing)

Our dedicated [EDI Webpage](#) explains our approach that EDI is central to everything we do.

Marketing and Communications staff play a pivotal role in communicating our EDI commitment to our audiences by ensuring all images used in communications reflect diversity. They also ensure access to our communications for disabled people and speakers of minority languages and implement changes to address inequalities

To improve our EDI performance internally and externally, our senior level **Diversity Champions** usually occupy a board or executive level position and take on this role in addition to their existing senior leadership role. Diversity Champions have a range of formal, structured and specific responsibilities with the expressed aim of driving improvements in organisational diversity performance generally, or in a specific area and operate in the Champion role in the context of the corporate strategy.

Diversity Champion activities are consistently aligned with the needs and strategic objectives of the British Council and require the Champion to develop a deep understanding of the relevance of EDI to our core work and stakeholders - and the

varying ways in which it impacts our people and service delivery. They help to promote EDI and raise awareness of related issues and drive the changes required to embed EDI across the British Council: to engage staff and customers. Another benefit is that they leverage EDI benefits in terms of employee engagement, enhanced reputation and support our ambition to become a market leader in the services we deliver worldwide.

Locally, we disseminate our commitment to EDI, and the measures we take to address it, at promotional/information events to key stakeholders and customers and also through consultation. We are a JAM Card Friendly Organisation (see Q2) and champion diversity by creating diverse teams and flexing our style to appropriately match others in an inclusive way. EDI Group to seek ways of using our local Accredited Diversity Facilitator to promote our EDI message externally.

11) Ensure all online activity is as accessible as possible (ongoing)

All corporate accessibility guidelines are saved in a dedicated Teams space for staff to access. All communications online are in line with [Web Accessibility Guidelines](#) and [Public Sector accessibility guidelines](#). An Inclusive Language Guide and “Ten Actions for written visual and verbal communication” document (see Appendices) are available to staff.

In April 2024, staff were invited to view three short films by the [British Assistive Technology Association](#) which discussed assistive technology (AT) in school contexts, but which is transferable to workplace inclusion and reasonable adjustments. Staff also viewed the [Essential Guide to the European Accessibility Act](#) what it means for us as an organisation, and how it creates a common baseline for disabled people's digital inclusion through changes in national legislation and regulations. We also joined internal webinars to celebrate [Global Accessibility Awareness Day](#) and one specifically on How to Make out Work More Accessible in May 2024.

- 8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2023-24 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

None

- 9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2023-24 reporting period, the following have been identified: (*tick all that apply*)

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

Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)

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

X All the time

Sometimes

Never

11 Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2023-24 reporting period, on matters relevant (eg 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:

In accordance with the commitments made in our Equality Scheme we recognise the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of our statutory equality duties. We consult as a matter of form on our equality scheme, equality impact assessments action measures and any other matters deemed relevant to Section 75 Statutory duties.

We carry out our consultation in accordance with the principles contained in the Equality Commissions' guidance Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (2010). All consultations will seek the views of those directly affected by the matter/policy, the Equality Commission, representative groups of Section 75 categories, other public authorities, voluntary and community groups, our staff and such other groups who have a legitimate interest in the matter, whether or not they have a direct economic or personal interest. We consider the accessibility and format of consultation we use in order to remove barriers to the consultation process.

Specific consideration is given to how best to communicate with people with disabilities, including people with learning disabilities and minority ethnic communities. Information is made available, on request, in alternative formats in a timely manner. We ensure that such consultees have equal time to respond.

We provide feedback to consultees in a timely manner. A feedback report is prepared which includes 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 is provided in formats suitable to consultees.

Internally, HR visit each region and conduct climate surveys on staff 'wellbeing'. This provides a forum for staff to meet face-to-face with a HR colleague, share viewpoints and outline what 'wellbeing' in its broadest context meant to them as a British Council employee. Follow up communication is circulated to staff outlining next steps and action measures.

Externally, feedback is sought from service users on all our programmes many of which are schools or college programs. The views of participants (children, teenagers and young adults) are taken into consideration directly and indirectly via teachers and

program directors and help shape development and direction of future programmes and services.

The British Council offers a number of internships each year to enable a group of interns to see and experience the work of the British Council at first hand and champion the value of cultural relations.

The objectives of the internship scheme is as follows:

- To offer structured work experience placements within a specific business area to a group of interns
- To give a real introduction to the field of cultural relations to a group of interns
- To enable British Council departments to get support and benefit from a different perspective on their work

As part of the Internship programme, interns attend a three day corporate induction before joining a specific department for twelve weeks. They have a line manager and are set specific deliverables during their stay. In addition, they also undertake a group project which they present to staff and stakeholders at the end of the programme.

Work experience programmes are also managed for approximately ten school students a year and approximately five for higher education students. This scheme is co-ordinated by a local manager affording students the opportunity to gain insights into the broad remit of learning and development opportunities available according to their interests.

12 In the 2023-24 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:

We have an extensive list of consultees from across a wide range of organisations across all the Section 75 groups. See Appendices for full list.

We ensure accessibility of all documentation by making all documents available in alternative formats on request. All documentation is also accessible on our website.

13 Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

Yes X No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

We informed the general public about the availability of this material through press releases where appropriate

14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

X Yes No Not applicable – no commitment to review

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

<https://nireland.britishcouncil.org/about/equal-opportunities-diversity>

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

4

16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2023-24:

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

PART A

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

All ESIA's can be found on the Northern Ireland EDI webpage:
<https://nireland.britishcouncil.org/about/equal-opportunities-diversity>

- 1) ESIA Finance and Procurement Policy
- 2) ESIA Global Workforce Planning solution
- 3) ESIA Guidance on Faith and Quiet room
- 4) ESIA Religion and Belief Guide

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

- Yes X No concerns were raised No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

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

19 Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2023-24 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes X No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

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

20 From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2023-24 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes X No, already taken place
 No, scheduled to take place at a later date Not applicable

Please provide any details:

We monitor our progress on the delivery of our action measures annually and update the action plan as necessary to ensure that it remains effective and relevant to our

PART A

functions, internal processes, staff and customers. We also monitor participation in our programmes via monitoring questionnaires and we also monitor complaints if they arise.

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

Yes X No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

- 22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2023-24 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

No changes were made to the Equality Action Plan. Please see Q7 for full details on action measures and current progress.

- 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:

None

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 2023-24, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

See Q2 for training undertaken in 2023-24.

We have in place a communication and training programme for all staff and continued to ensure that our commitment to the Section 75 statutory duties was made clear in all relevant publications.

We ensure that staff are informed of interesting and relevant stories or case study examples of particular issues affecting people across the range of Section 75 categories, to ensure that our staff fully understand their role in implementing the scheme.

Our training plan for staff achieves the following objectives:

- raised awareness of the provisions of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, our equality scheme commitments and the particular issues likely to affect people across the range of Section 75 categories, to ensure that our staff fully understand their role in implementing the scheme
- provided those staff involved in the assessment of policies (screening and Equality Impact Assessment) with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
- provided those staff who deal with complaints in relation to compliance with our equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to investigate and monitor complaints effectively
- provided those staff involved in consultation processes with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
- provided those staff involved in the implementation and monitoring of the British Council Northern Ireland's equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.

All British Council Northern Ireland staff and the Northern Ireland Advisory Committee have a copy of the Equality Scheme and were invited to comment on it. All new staff - both permanent and temporary have receive comprehensive induction training which included explanation of duties/responsibilities as they apply under Section 75.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training is incorporated into local Induction Training programmes which covers all legal requirements under the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Section 75 statutory duties.

EDI is an inherent component of regular British Council online training which is a mandatory requirement and which all staff must complete on an annual basis.

The Diversity Unit has created a document which includes tips to help anyone that designs or modifies websites to have web accessibility in mind. When designing a website it is important to realise how people with disabilities use the Web, what difficulties they may face and how to assist them in overcoming those difficulties.

In an attempt to raise office awareness of Diversity, we marked and celebrated some key international diversity days throughout the year and organised regional diversity weeks across our global network that have

helped staff and external audiences engage with diversity issues in a new way.

As the British Council offer so many courses and programmes via web links, they are constantly growing and being updated. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) is available for those designing a website which outlined advice on making the site more easily accessible to older people. Included also is a template for accessibility evaluation reports to assess if needs are being met.

We have produced a document with information for Intranet users who are visually impaired and/or who would prefer to change the appearance of the intranet pages to make them more accessible.

The Northern Ireland office has a dedicated Equality Manager who is specifically responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of their obligations in meeting the requirements of/developments within Section 75 and the commitments of our equality scheme. The Equality Manager is our direct link to other parts of the UK to ensure that our legislative requirements specific to Northern Ireland are incorporated into all policies and processes.

As a means of raising awareness of LGBT issues the British Council created the Five Films for Freedom Campaign. This was the world's first global, digital LGBT film festival initiated by the British Council and the British Film Institute and runs annually in March. The campaign seeks to promote freedom, equality and LGBT rights in 135 countries across the social media network and all staff are invited to a screening of the films annually.

Our Global Diversity Network is made up of two or more representatives from each region, who work with the Diversity Unit in a formalised way. They support their management teams in each region to mainstream equality and diversity in all our practices. They have expertise and understanding of the different cultures and contexts in which they work, so they can ensure our corporate diversity initiatives are meaningful and relevant and can be applied in each region. The GDN share ideas and good practice using a GDN mailbase. This is a mailing list that all staff interested in finding out more about equality and diversity can subscribe to. It is a place for sharing good practice, asking for advice from other colleagues and joining in debates and discussions about topical issues related to global equality and diversity so that we can all learn from each other around equality and diversity.

- 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 from staff showed that the online mandatory EDI training is clear and informative.

Full details of staff training throughout the year can be found in Q2

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

- 26** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2023-24, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

We continue to ensure all external communication is as accessible as possible. The Northern Ireland website is built for accessibility and usability with a clear visual hierarchy – making it easy for the user to navigate through the website content - this includes making text readable and understandable and having content appear and operate in predictable ways. We use good font size and colour contrast combinations, which is helpful for users with colour-blindness and other visual impairments and have included captions and alternatives for our audio and visual content, for those with hearing/vision difficulties.

We use inclusive language throughout the website – for example, we use ‘people first’ language which keeps the individual as the most essential element. Characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, religion, racial group or ability are only used when relevant. We avoid idioms, jargons, and acronyms: which can exclude people who may not have specialised knowledge of a particular subject and impede effective communication as a result. An accessible language guide is available for all staff.

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

- 27** How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2023-24?

Insert number here:

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

No complaints were raised this year.

Section 3: Looking Forward

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

The Equality Scheme was reviewed in January 2020 and will run until 2025.

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*)

- **Monitoring**

1) External: We will continue to monitor our external beneficiaries to identify under-representation. We will expand the scope of those being monitored to include on-off events and our new global programmes. We hope to include a question on socio-economic background to establish whether we are reaching participants from a diverse range of backgrounds. We will continue to find ways to increase the diversity of our participants (see Q2 for more details).

2) Internal: UK wide we are making efforts to reach a target of 100% response rate on online HR portal for staff as well as Northern Ireland Advisory Committee (NIAC) and Board of Trustees to record their personal monitoring data.

3) We will continue to monitor the composition of staff in our wider team and implement actions to increase the diversity of staff (see Q2 for more details).

We aim to increase the number of staff with disabilities via our guaranteed interview scheme for disabled applicants.

Our corporate targets are: 50 per cent women; 15 per cent minority ethnic staff and 7 per cent disabled staff in senior roles.

The Equality Monitoring intranet site contains an animation about how and why we carry out equality monitoring at the British Council, plus guidance on carrying out equality monitoring, our 12 top tips to consider before embarking on equality monitoring, and links to the latest UK equality monitoring reports and some of the good examples of equality monitoring carried out in different country offices. See all guides here: www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/how-we-work/equality-diversity-inclusion/resources

- **Underrepresentation within protected characteristics**

We will continue to seek to find ways to further increase the underrepresented groups in senior management (women, ethnic minorities and disabled staff).

We will seek to establish contacts with specialist diversity recruiters in Northern Ireland using accredited diverse talent specialists, working across a range of diverse strands including; Disability, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race, Religion, Generational, Transgender, Obesity, Education, Class, Working Parents and Carers. This will broaden access not only to those with disability but groups across the range of protected characteristics.

Within the Northern Ireland office specifically, we will seek ways to increase the percentage of ethnic minority staff which is currently low (although this most likely reflect the low percentage in the local population) but this is a group which we could target when recruiting. The age profile of staff should continue to be regularly monitored and ensure there are no barriers to staff in the 51+ age group.

As a means of increasing the number of disabled staff across the organisation, recruitment teams have specifically addressed the issue of broadening access to those with disability by establishing contracts with specialist diversity recruiters (such as Employability, Equal Approach, Diversity Jobs) using accredited diverse talent specialists, working across a range of diverse strands including; Disability, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race, Religion, Generational, Transgender, Obesity, Education, Class, Working Parents and Carers. This has broadened access not only to those with disability but groups across the range of protected characteristics. In line with the British Council EDI strategy these efforts shall continue until targets have been met to address areas of under representation and remove any possible barriers to equality of opportunity. By respecting and valuing diversity we are more likely to attract talent and fresh perspectives, nurture creativity, innovation and flexibility and new opportunities and sources of support, so we remain relevant and dynamic and achieve greater reach and impact.

We also consider opportunities for disabled people to work for the British Council Northern Ireland for example through work experience or internship programmes via Disability Action NI. We also hope to 'road test' some of our events with an external disability expert to gain feedback on how we can ensure all our events are accessible.

- **Reasonable Adjustments**

We will continue to record and monitor data on number of reasonable adjustment requests actioned (internally and externally) using the Reasonable Adjustments Log which will continue to enable us to assess the effectiveness of reasonable adjustments made using a formalised approach.

- **Gender & Inclusion**

To address our slightly widened gender pay gap due to fewer women proportionally in senior management and more women proportionally in junior management, we will continue to implement the following actions:

- Implement the next phase of talent management and succession planning
- Implement business unit specific action planning in Cultural Engagement and English and Exams
- Investigate why women left senior management in higher numbers and whether this was a one off or part of a wider trend using data from exit interviews
- Investigate whether there are any issues with the way we recruit at junior levels – ie why do we not attract more men at junior level and why is it that those who do apply are less likely to be recruited than a female applicant.
- Look at role profiles to ensure they are accessible and contain inclusive language

- **Diversity Strategy**

We will focus our efforts on maintaining or increasing the Diversity Assessment Framework score of out 5 of 6 indicators. The next deadline for submissions is May 2025.

- **Training & Communications**

- 1) Further staff training has been planned throughout 2024-25.
- 2) We will encourage all staff to create an EDI deliverable in their performance portfolio for 2024/25 and find ways to ensure EDI is mainstreamed across the office.
- 3) We will seek ways of further improving communications with staff on EDI updates. An EDI update will continue to form part of our monthly staff meetings and we will meet regularly with leaders of all SBUs in the Northern Ireland office regarding the impact of EDI on their work programmes in order to re-affirm our commitment to and awareness of EDI responsibilities and Section 75 duties.

- **Consultation**

We will consider a more focussed consultation strategy via our social media channels and possibly focus groups to groups representing the various categories in Section 75 and will continue to revise our consultation list on a regular basis.

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next (2024-25) 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:

4

Fully achieved

1

Partially achieved

Not achieved

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

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

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs ⁱ	Outcomes / Impact ⁱⁱ
National ⁱⁱⁱ			
Regional ^{iv}			
Local ^v	Identified reasonable adjustments requests and recorded them to the reasonable adjustments log to keep a record of any potential barriers to participation for disabled people.		Identified good practice in providing adjustments for disabled people to participate in our programmes eg provision of fridges in students' accommodation to store medication

PART B

	All written communication online and delivery of presentations were completed in an accessible format		Participants with disabilities were able to participate in the events
	Documents entitled “Making online meetings more accessible” and “Tips for making slides more accessible” were compiled and shared with staff (see appendices)		Ensured that online meetings and events were as inclusive as possible for disabled participants.
	Investigating opportunities for disabled people to undertake work shadowing or work placements		To be considered in 2024/25

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

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
	Awareness Session on Neurodiversity and cognitive disability (July 2023)	The session covered terminology under the umbrella of neurodiversity, including the difference in UK and US terminology. The session also addressed access barriers that colleagues who are neurodiverse or have cognitive differences may encounter in the workplace. Tips and strategies were provided to make our workplace more cognitively accessible, both digitally and non-digitally.	Colleagues gained with more understanding of different types of disability and challenges faced by colleagues and how this impacts them, methods to better support them in the workplace and an increased awareness and visibility of neurodiversity.

PART B

	<p>Awareness session on Disability (Feb 2024)</p>	<p>Provided an understanding of a broad definition of disability, including hidden disabilities, and workplace barriers faced by disabled people; what needs to happen when disability is disclosed; what support is available within the British Council for anybody with a disability or a learning difficulty such as dyslexia; compliance with UK Equality legislation and promotion of the Disability Inclusion Guide</p>	<p>Increased understanding of broad definition of disability (including neurodivergence) including non-visible forms of disability which may help us bring the non-disclosure rates down. Staff also gained an increased understanding and confidence in language and etiquette and knowledge of reasonable adjustments and line management responsibility. As a result of the session we addressed data gaps (reducing not given rates in staff monitoring data) and knowledge gaps: around disability discrimination, UK legislation</p>
--	---	--	--

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	<p>Time to Talk' days held annually for staff to discuss, share and reflect about mental health and wellbeing and share organisational resources</p>		<p>Increased awareness of organisation's Keep Well Campaign and support offered to staff</p>
2	<p>Celebration of annual international diversity days</p>		<p>Increased awareness of issues facing those from under-represented groups and how we as an organisation can help recognize and address these issues and prevent barriers to participation in our programmes</p>

PART B

3	EDI working group with representatives from across various SBUs in the Northern Ireland office and other UK offices.	Increased communication and tighter monitoring of desired outcomes against targets	Facilitate training, communication, mainstreaming and adherence to EDI principles, providing feedback to teams locally on disability and EDI organisational and local issues.
4	A global anti-racism hub		All anti-racism and black lives matter resources are consolidated in one accessible space
5	EDI updates at monthly staff meetings		Ensuring EDI is at the forefront of planning of events and ongoing programme activity. Wellbeing updates (addressing mental and physical health of staff) continue to be important as the majority of staff continue to work largely from home.

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

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Section 75 training is provided to all new staff at induction stage		Staff are aware of the requirements by law of the Section 75 duties as a public authority
2	The legal monitoring requirements under the Fair Employment Act 1995 are communicated to staff when discussing the results of the		Staff are aware of the requirements by law of the Fair Employment Act 1995 as a public authority

PART B

	external monitoring of programme participants		
	All grant agreements and contracts contain information on our commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity across all our activities and programmes		All customers are aware of our equality commitment
	The Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plan were shared with members of our Northern Ireland Advisory Committee		Advisory Committee members are aware of the requirements of the Equality Scheme

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

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1	The Microsoft Teams EDI folder is accessible to all Northern Ireland staff to access up-to-date information and documentation on all EDI issues including disability and reasonable adjustments		Staff to be equipped with knowledge and information to provide customer service excellence and ensure equality of opportunity through programmes and online events

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

PART B

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestonesvi / Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	Further develop disability related arts projects such as Unlimited Disability Arts Festival, Bounce Festival and University of Atypical to support disabled and deaf people’s involvement in the arts and facilitate the dissemination of artists’ work to reach UK and international audiences.		Promote positive attitudes towards disabled artists and their work	This is an ongoing arts related activity and dependent on outside agencies and funding.
2				

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

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1		
2		

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

PART B

Feedback from staff, Business Disability Forum, Northern Ireland Advisory Committee, recruiting managers, Diversity Unit and HR department.

(b) Quantitative

Feedback from customers using event and programme equality monitoring and evaluation forms.

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

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

No

If yes please outline below:

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

PART B

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 was revised, consulted and submitted to the Equality Commission at the end of 2019.

ⁱ **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.

ⁱⁱ **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.

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

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

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

^{vi} **Milestones** – Please outline what part progress has been made towards the particular measures; even if full output or outcomes/ impact have not been achieved.