

August 2024



**EQUALITY SCHEME FOR
BRITISH COUNCIL NORTHERN IRELAND**

*Drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the
Northern Ireland Act 1998*

**This document can be made available in a range of formats on request.
Please contact us with your requirements (see below for contact
details).**

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Foreword

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Act¹.

In our equality scheme we set out how British Council Northern Ireland proposes to fulfill the Section 75 statutory duties.

We will commit the necessary resources in terms of people, time and money to make sure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that the equality scheme is implemented effectively and on time.

We commit to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring our compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing our progress.

We have developed and will continue to implement a programme of communication and training with the aim of ensuring that all our staff and advisory committee members are made fully aware of our equality scheme and understand the commitments and obligations within it.

We, Dr Katy Radford (Chair) and Jonathan Stewart (Director) of British Council Northern Ireland, are fully committed to fulfilling our Section 75 statutory duties across all our functions through the implementation of our equality scheme.

We realise the important role that the community and voluntary sector and the general public have to play to ensure the Section 75 statutory duties are implemented. Our equality scheme demonstrates how determined we are to ensure there are opportunities, for people affected by our work, to positively influence how we carry out our activities in line with our Section 75 statutory duties. It also offers the means whereby persons directly affected by what they consider to be a failure, on our part, to comply with our equality scheme, can make complaints.

¹ See section 1.1 of our Equality Scheme.

On behalf of British Council Northern Ireland and our staff we are pleased to support and endorse this Equality Scheme which has been drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Commission guidelines.

Dr Katy Radford (Chair)



August 2024

Jonathan Stewart (Director)



August 2024

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

1.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires British Council Northern Ireland to comply with two statutory duties:

Section 75 (1)

In carrying out our activities we are required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between

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

Section 75 (2)

In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, in carrying out our activities we are required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

“Activities” include the “powers and duties” of a public authority². This includes our employment and procurement functions.

Please see below under “Who we are and what we do” for a detailed explanation of our functions.

How we propose to fulfill the Section 75 duties in relation to the relevant activities of British Council Northern Ireland.

1.2 Schedule 9 4. (1) of the Act requires British Council Northern Ireland as a designated public authority to set out in an equality scheme how it proposes to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75 in relation to its relevant functions. This equality scheme is intended to fulfil that statutory requirement. It is both a statement of our arrangements for fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties and our plan for their implementation.

1.3 British Council Northern Ireland is committed to the discharge of its Section 75 obligations and we will commit the necessary available resources in terms of people, time and money to ensure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that our equality scheme can be implemented effectively.

² Section 98 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Who we are and what we do

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with.

Our strategy in the UK is founded on an ambition to inspire and inform an international outlook among our citizens and strengthen our global connections. We aim to achieve this through five strategic priorities:

- 1. Focus on what we are best at:** We focus on young people, influencers and future leaders. We make an impact across arts and culture, education and the English language where we have global leadership, and we invest to maintain our competitive edge. We link our areas of expertise to make our offers distinct, connecting people across local, national, UK and international networks. We combine quality and creativity and stay relevant through changing times. We are well known in the UK and globally for what we do.
- 2. Deliver a unique mix of physical and digital presence:** We maintain the broadest face-to-face network, complemented with an ambitious digital offering. This combination of face-to-face and digital sets us apart from our competitors and delivers a unique experience for our partners and customers.
- 3. Maintain collaborative independence:** Our work supports the international aspirations of all four governments of the UK, and we operate at arm's length from the political process to ensure we build long-term trust wherever we operate.
- 4. Be one British Council with an attractive culture:** We act as a single organisation to maximise our impact and efficiency, while allowing the flexibility needed for each area of our operations to thrive. Partners' and customers' journeys across the British Council are seamless. Our people and our partners experience a culture that promotes excellence, respect, inclusion and diversity. We are environmentally responsible.
- 5. Be professional and constantly learning:** We will be financially sound, diversify our sources of funding, simplify and be agile. We focus on data and evidence. We constantly evolve and get better.

Governance

The British Council is an executive Non-Departmental Public Body, a Public Corporation (in accounting terms) and is registered in England, Wales and Scotland as a charity.

The British Council is managed by a Senior Leadership Team and is governed by a Board of Trustees who are accountable for the organisation. The trustees meet six times a year.

The Northern Ireland Advisory Committee provides advice on issues relating to Northern Ireland, ensuring both an effective Northern Ireland contribution to overall British Council strategic objectives and corporate priorities, and an effective response to the needs of British Council target constituencies within Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Advisory Committee has access to the Board of Trustees through its Chair and has access to the British Council's senior management through the Regional UK Director, who attends its meetings. The NI advisory Committee is made up of externals representing our three main business areas.

Northern Ireland is part of the British Council's United Kingdom Region (UK Region) along with Scotland, Wales and England. British Council Northern Ireland delivers international cultural relations impact by working with partners to achieve recognition for Northern Ireland as a confident, creative and forward-looking region of the UK and to add value and local context to the British Council's programme areas.

British Council Northern Ireland works with local stakeholders such as the Executive Office, Department of Education, Department for the Economy and the Department for Communities. We also work with universities, city councils and the Arts Council. By working closely with our local stakeholders we aim to ensure that the assets and strengths of Northern Ireland inform and add value to our international work and play a pivotal role in making a difference throughout the world. In Northern Ireland we share Northern Ireland's assets in education, the arts and English language with people of other countries and help people from the UK and other countries to understand each other better, by working within our main programme areas as follows:

Arts

British Council Northern Ireland connects and showcases the best of Northern Ireland's arts with audiences and artists internationally; stimulating the development of home-grown artistic products and encouraging our local arts sector to work internationally. We work closely with Arts Council Northern Ireland, and this year (2024) have resigned our memorandum of understanding between the two organisations to ensure that Northern Ireland's creative sector is benefitting fully from international engagement.

Education

British Council Northern Ireland helps to develop the international skills and experiences of young people in Northern Ireland to participate in the global economy. It provides opportunities for policy-makers, head-teachers and teachers to benefit from sharing and learning from international practice.

British Council Northern Ireland helps strengthen international partnerships for local higher education institutions. International partnerships strengthen the UK's global position, making a vital contribution to its capacity for research, technological growth and innovation. By facilitating international policy dialogue, the British Council is helping to position the UK as a leader in education policy and allows UK policy-makers to learn from international dialogue.

We help UK students to develop an international outlook, skills and experience necessary for the UK's economic success in the global economy. We run the Study USA mobility programme on behalf of the Department for the Economy, providing full academic scholarships to the US for 50-60 students from Northern Ireland annually.

We promote the Study UK brand, helping to attract international students to chose the UK as a study destination in our universities and colleges.

English language

In Northern Ireland we have five accredited English language centres, providing a kite mark of quality for international students. British Council Northern Ireland promotes Northern Ireland as a destination to learn English, raising awareness of our online offer and working with local centres to promote Northern Ireland internationally.

The British Council's Equality Policy applies to all staff, and there is also a requirement to ensure that clients, customers and suppliers are aware of this Policy and their obligations to work and operate within its parameters as appropriate. Everyone is required to ensure their behaviour demonstrates respect for the fundamental human right of every person not to be unjustifiably discriminated against on grounds of perceived difference.

The Equality Policy helps to ensure there is no unjustified discrimination in the recruitment, retention, training and development of staff. This policy benefits employees, potential employees, partners, clients and customers and helps achieve dignity at work, as well as contributing to providing the best possible services to all stakeholders.

Every year, three million people take international exams through the British Council. Students and professionals gain qualifications that pave the way to leading academic institutions and improve their employment prospects around the world, while partner schools and organisations create new opportunities in their communities.

Chapter 2 Our arrangements for assessing our Compliance with the section 75 duties

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (a))

2.1 Some of our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties are outlined in other relevant parts of this equality scheme. In addition we have the following arrangements in place for assessing our compliance:

Responsibilities and reporting

2.2 We are committed to the fulfilment of our Section 75 obligations across all our functions, including in all of our programme areas (Arts, Education and English). The Northern Ireland Advisory Committee (NIAC) meets three times per year with senior managers. This forum provides the opportunity to discuss and provide updates on our programmes which aim to build trust with a diverse range of people, including those from the 9 categories covered by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (the Act). Our activities in our programme areas ensure we comply with the requirements of the Act.

2.3 Responsibility for the implementation of our equality scheme lies with Director Northern Ireland. Director Northern Ireland is accountable to the British Council for the development, implementation, maintenance and review of the equality scheme in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, including any good practice or guidance that has been or may be issued by the Equality Commission.

2.4 If you have any questions or comments regarding our equality scheme, please contact in the first instance Sarah Brisbane at the address given below and we will respond to you as soon as possible:

Sarah Brisbane
Equality Manager
British Council Northern Ireland
The Boat
49 Queen's Square
Belfast
BT1 3FG
Email sarah.brisbane@britishcouncil.org

2.5 The British Council's Corporate Plan (2023/4 to 2024/5) outlines the organisation's intention to continue to enable the people of the UK to connect and better understand with peoples from other countries across the world through the programme areas of Arts, Education and English. Promoting equality of opportunity and good relations is integrated into this intention.

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

2.7 The British Council prepares an annual report on the progress we have made in implementing the arrangements set out in this equality scheme to discharge our Section 75 statutory duties (Section 75 Annual Progress Report).

The Section 75 annual progress report is sent to the Equality Commission by 31 August each year and follows any guidance on annual reporting issued by the Equality Commission.

2.8 The latest Section 75 annual progress report is available on our website: <https://nireland.britishcouncil.org/about/equal-opportunities-diversity> or by contacting:

Sarah Brisbane
Equality Manager
British Council
The Boat
49 Queen's Square
Belfast
BT1 3FG

Email sarah,brisbane@britishcouncil.org

2.9 The British Council will liaise closely with the Equality Commission to ensure that progress on the implementation of our equality scheme is maintained.

2.10 The equality scheme will be distributed to the Northern Ireland Advisory Committee for approval, and arrangements for its implementation will be agreed.

Action plan/action measures

2.11 British Council Northern Ireland will develop an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

2.12 The action measures that will make up our action plan will be relevant to our functions, including our programme areas.

2.13 Action measures will be specific, measurable, linked to achievable outcomes, realistic and time bound. Action measures will include performance indicators and timescales for their achievement.

2.14 We will develop any action plans for a period of between one and five years in order to align them with our corporate and business planning cycles. Implementation of the action measures will be incorporated into our business planning process.

2.15 We will seek input from our stakeholders and consult on our action plan before we send it to the Equality Commission and thereafter when reviewing the plan as per 2.16 below.

2.16 We will 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 programme areas.

2.17 British Council Northern Ireland will include any changes or amendments to our action plan in our Section 75 annual progress report to the Commission, which will incorporate information on progress we have made in implementing our action plans/action measures.

2.18 Our current action plan is available on our website at <https://nireland.britishcouncil.org/about/equal-opportunities-diversity>. The action plan can be made available in alternative formats, on request. See Section 6.3.

Chapter 3 Our arrangements for consulting

3.1 We recognise the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of our statutory equality duties. We will consult on our equality scheme, action measures, equality impact assessments and other matters relevant to the Section 75 statutory duties.

3.2 We are committed to carrying out consultation in accordance with the following principles (as contained in the Equality Commission's guidance '*Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)*').

3.2.1 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.

Initially all consultees (see Appendix 3), as a matter of course, will be notified (by email or post) of the matter/policy being consulted upon to ensure they are aware of all consultations. Thereafter, to ensure the most effective use of our and our consultees' resources, we will take a targeted approach to consultation for those consultees that may have a particular interest in the matter/policy being consulted upon and to whom the matter/policy is of particular relevance. This may include for example regional or local consultations, sectoral or thematic consultation etc.

3.2.2 Consultation with all stakeholders will begin as early as possible. We will engage with affected individuals and representative groups to identify how best to consult or engage with them. We will ask our consultees what their preferred consultation methods are and will give consideration to these. Methods of consultation could include:

- 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/opt out of the consultation
- Internet discussions
- Telephone consultations

This list is not exhaustive and we may develop other additional methods of consultation more appropriate to key stakeholders and the matter being consulted upon.

3.2.3 We will consider the accessibility and format of every method of consultation we use in order to remove barriers to the consultation process. Specific consideration will be given as to how best to communicate with people with disabilities, including people with learning disabilities and minority ethnic communities. We take account of existing and developing good practice, including the Equality Commission's guidance *Let's Talk Let's Listen – Guidance for public authorities on consulting and involving children and young people (2008)*.

Information will be made available, on request, in alternative formats³, in a timely manner. We will ensure that such consultees have equal time to respond.

Specific training is provided to those facilitating consultations to ensure that they have the necessary skills to communicate positively with consultees.

3.2.4 To ensure effective consultation with consultees⁴ on Section 75 matters, we will develop a programme of awareness raising on the Section 75 statutory duties and the commitments in our equality scheme.

3.2.5 The consultation period will last twelve weeks to allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves as part of the process of forming a view. However, in exceptional circumstances when this timescale is not feasible (for example implementing EU Directives or UK wide legislation meeting Health and Safety requirements, addressing urgent public health matters or complying with Court judgements), we may shorten timescales to eight weeks. We may continue consultation thereafter and will review the policy as part of our monitoring commitments⁵.

Where, under these exceptional circumstances, we must implement a policy immediately, as it is beyond our authority's control, we may consult after implementation of the policy, in order to ensure that any impacts of the policy are considered.

3.2.6 If a consultation exercise is to take place over a period when consultees are less able to respond, for example, over the summer or Christmas break, or if the policy under consideration is particularly complex,

³ See Chapter 6 of our equality scheme for further information on alternative formats of information we provide.

⁴ Please see Appendix 3 for a list of our consultees.

⁵ Please see below at 4.26 to 4.30 for details on monitoring.

we will give consideration to the feasibility of allowing a longer period for the consultation.

3.2.7 We are conscious of the fact that affected individuals and representative groups may have different needs. We will take appropriate measures to ensure full participation in any meetings that are held. We will consider for example the time of day, the appropriateness of the venue, in particular whether it can be accessed by those with disabilities, how the meeting is to be conducted, the use of appropriate language and whether a signer and/or interpreter is necessary.

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

3.2.9 A list of our consultees is included in this equality scheme at Appendix 3. It can also be obtained by contacting:

Sarah Brisbane
Equality Manager
British Council
The Boat
49 Queen's Square
Belfast
BT1 3FG

Email sarah.brisbane@britishcouncil.org

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

3.3 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. (Please see also 6.3)

3.4 Our consultation list is not exhaustive and will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it remains relevant to our functions and policies.

We welcome enquiries from any person/s or organisations wishing to be added to the list of consultees. Please contact Sarah Brisbane (contact details above) to provide your contact details and have your areas of interest noted or have your name/details removed or amended. Please also inform

us at this stage if you would like information sent to you in a particular format or language.

Chapter 4 Our arrangements for assessing, monitoring and publishing the impact of policies

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (b); Schedule 9 4. (2) (c); Schedule 9 4. (2) (d); Schedule 9 9. (1); Schedule 9 9.(2))

Our arrangements for assessing the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted on the promotion of equality of opportunity (Schedule 9 4. (2) (b))

4.1 In the context of Section 75, ‘policy’ is very broadly defined and it covers all the ways in which we carry out or propose to carry out our functions in relation to Northern Ireland. In respect of this equality scheme, the term policy is used for any (proposed/amended/existing) strategy, policy initiative or practice and/or decision, whether written or unwritten and irrespective of the label given to it, eg, ‘draft’, ‘pilot’, ‘high level’ or ‘sectoral’.

4.2 In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, we take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy, as required by Schedule 9 9. (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Screening

4.3 We use the tools of equality screening and impact assessment (ESIA) and Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations⁶. In carrying out these assessments we will relate them to the intended outcomes of the policy in question and will also follow Equality Commission guidance on undertaking an equality impact assessment as detailed in the Commission’s guidance ‘*Practical guidance on equality impact assessment (February 2005)*’.

Any policy relevant to Northern Ireland which has a major impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity or good relations will also normally be subject to a full equality impact assessment (EQIA) in accordance with Equality Commission guidance on carrying out Equality Impact Assessments.

Equality Screening and Impact Assessment (ESIA)

⁶ (The British Council’s ESIA process is equivalent to the Equality Commissions screening exercise and equality impact assessment (EIA) should not be confused with EQIA which is a more detailed equality impact assessment (EQIA) carried out in accordance with Equality Commission guidance, ‘Practical Guidance on equality impact assessment (February 2005)’)

4.4 The purpose of equality screening and impact assessment (ESIA) is to identify those policies that are likely to have an impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

4.5 ESIA is completed at the earliest opportunity in the policy development/review process. Policies which we propose to adopt will be subject to ESIA prior to implementation.

4.6 The lead role in the ESIA of a policy is taken by the policy owner who has the authority to make changes to that policy. However, ESIA will also involve other relevant team members, for example, those who implement the policy and staff members from other relevant work areas. Where possible we will include key stakeholders in the ESIA process.

The groups/characteristics

4.7 We particularly focus on: age, dependant responsibilities (with or without), disability, gender including transgender, marital status/civil partnership, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief and sexual orientation. Invariably there are other areas and characteristics to consider including full-time/part-time working, geographical location, tribe/caste/clan or language, dependent on the country.

4.8 The following questions are applied to all our policies as part of the ESIA process:

- Are a large number of people affected by the proposed policy?
- Are a small number of people who are particularly under-represented, or disadvantaged, or excluded, affected by the proposed policy?
- Are the proposed changes (if this is a new policy, or a change to an existing policy) profound?
- Might the proposal benefit people within any of the groups identified above?
- Might the proposal disadvantage people within any of the groups identified above?

All policies impacting on Northern Ireland must also proceed to the next stage of equality impact assessment (EIA). In order to answer the questions contained in the ESIA template we gather all relevant information and data, both qualitative and quantitative. In taking this evidence into account we consider the different needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 equality categories. Any screening decision will be informed by this evidence.

4.9 Completion of ESIA, taking into account our consideration of the completed ESIA template (see appendix 6), will lead to one of the following outcomes:

1. the policy will go forward for equality impact assessment (EQIA)
2. the policy will not go forward for equality impact assessment (EQIA),
3. If a minor impact is identified then we may on occasion proceed with an EQIA
4. Alternatively, if a minor impact is identified and an EQIA is not to be conducted we will nonetheless consider measures that might mitigate the policy impact as well as alternative policies that might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity and/or good relations. This ESIA decision will be 'signed off' by the appropriate policy owner.

Equality impact assessment (EQIA)

4.10 Once a policy has been subject to ESIA and ESIA has identified that a full equality impact assessment (EQIA) is necessary, we will carry out the EQIA in accordance with Equality Commission guidance. The equality impact assessment will be carried out as part of the policy development process, before the policy is implemented.

4.11 An equality impact assessment (EQIA) is a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy, whether that policy is formal or informal, and irrespective of the scope of that policy. The primary function of an EQIA is to determine the extent of any impact of a policy upon the Section 75 categories and to determine if the impact is an adverse one. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate the likely positive outcomes of a policy and to seek ways to more effectively promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

In accordance with the Guide for Public Authorities, policies considered to have a major impact will depend on the following factors: if they are deemed to be significant in terms of strategic importance; if the potential equality impacts are unknown; if the potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups who are marginalised or disadvantaged

4.12 Any equality impact assessment will be subject to consultation at the appropriate stage(s). (For details see above Chapter 3 "Our Arrangements for Consulting").

Our arrangements for publishing the results of the assessments of the likely impact of policies we have adopted or propose to adopt on the promotion of equality of opportunity

4.13 We make publicly available the results of our equality screening and impact assessments (ESIA) and equality impact assessments (EQIA) of the likely impact of our policies on the promotion of equality and good relations

as soon as possible after completion on the British Council Northern Ireland website.

How we publish the information

4.14 All information we publish is accessible and can be made available in alternative formats on request. Please see 6.3 below.

Where we publish the information

4.15 The results of our equality screening and impact assessments (ESIA) and our equality impact assessments (EQIA) are available on our website.

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

Sarah Brisbane
Equality Manager
British Council
The Boat
49 Queen's Square
Belfast
BT1 3FG

Email sarah.brisbane@britishcouncil.org

4.16 In addition to the above, ESIA reports impacting on Northern Ireland (electronic link or hard copy on request if more suitable for recipients) which include all policies screened over a 12 month period are also sent directly to all consultees on an annual basis.

4.17 We will inform the general public about the availability of this material through communications such as press releases and on our website where appropriate.

Our arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact of policies we have adopted on equality of opportunity (Schedule 9 4. (2) (c))

4.18 Monitoring can assist us to deliver better public services and continuous improvements. Monitoring Section 75 information involves the processing of sensitive personal data (data relating to the racial or ethnic origin of individuals, sexual orientation, political opinion, religious belief, etc). In order to carry out monitoring in a confidential and effective manner, British Council Northern Ireland follows guidance from the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Equality Commission.

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

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

- The collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant primary quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories and other records on an ongoing basis
- Undertaking or commissioning new data if necessary.

4.21 If over a two-year period monitoring and evaluation show that a policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, we will ensure that the policy is revised to achieve better outcomes for relevant equality groups.

4.22 We review our EQIA monitoring information on an annual basis. Other monitoring information is reviewed on an annual basis.

Our arrangements for publishing the results of our monitoring (Schedule 9 4.(2) (d))

4.23 Schedule 9 4.(2) (d) requires us to publish the results of the monitoring of adverse impacts of policies we have adopted. However, we are committed to monitoring more broadly and the results of our policy monitoring are published as follows:

4.24 EQIA monitoring information is published as part of our Section 75 annual progress report [see 2.7]

4.25 Equality information is also available on our website
<https://nireland.britishcouncil.org>.

4.26 All information published is accessible and can be made available in alternative formats on request. Please see below at 6.3 for details.

Chapter 5 Staff training

(Schedule 9 4.(2) (e))

Commitment to staff training

5.1 British Council Northern Ireland recognises that awareness raising and training play a crucial role in the effective implementation of our Section 75 duties.

5.2 Our Director, Jonathan Stewart, wishes to positively communicate the commitment of British Council Northern Ireland to the Section 75 statutory duties, both internally and externally. To this end we have introduced an effective communication and training programme for all staff and will ensure that our commitment to the Section 75 statutory duties is made clear in all relevant publications.

Training objectives

5.3 British Council Northern Ireland will draw up a detailed training plan for its staff which will aim to achieve the following objectives:

- to raise 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
- to provide those staff involved in the assessment of policies (screening and Equality Impact Assessment) with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
- to provide 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
- to provide those staff involved in consultation processes with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
- to provide those staff involved in the implementation and monitoring of the effective implementation of the British Council Northern Ireland's equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.

Awareness raising and training arrangements

5.4 The following arrangements will be put in place to ensure all our staff and Northern Ireland Advisory Committee are aware of and understand our equality obligations.

- We will develop a summary of this equality scheme and make it available to all staff.
- We will provide access to copies of the full equality scheme for all staff and the Northern Ireland Advisory Committee and ensure that any queries or questions of clarification from staff and committee members are addressed effectively.
- Staff in British Council Northern Ireland will receive a briefing on this equality scheme within 3 months of approval of the scheme.
- The Section 75 statutory duties form part of induction training for new staff.
- Focused training is provided for key staff within British Council Northern Ireland who are directly engaged in taking forward the implementation of our equality scheme commitments (for example those involved in research and data collection, policy development, service design, conducting equality impact assessments, consultation, monitoring and evaluation).
- Where appropriate, training will be provided to ensure staff is aware of the issues experienced by the range of Section 75 groups.
- When appropriate and on an ongoing basis, arrangements will be made to ensure staff is kept up to date with Section 75 developments.

All British Council staff are required to undertake mandatory Equality Diversity and Inclusion training within a short time after appointment. Measures will be put in place to ensure that training on the Section 75 duties will be added to this training, for staff in British Council Northern Ireland.

When Equality Diversity and Inclusion training is undertaken, either in the offices of British Council Northern Ireland, or at alternative venues, training on the Section 75 duties, will be included in the training for staff based in British Council Northern Ireland.

5.5 In order to share resources and expertise, British Council Northern Ireland will, where possible, work closely with other bodies and agencies in the development and delivery of training.

Monitoring and evaluation

5.6 Our training programme is subject to the following monitoring and evaluation arrangements:

- We evaluate the extent to which all participants in our training programmes have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve each of the above objectives.

- The extent to which training objectives have been met will be reported on as part of the Section 75 annual progress report, which will be sent to the Equality Commission.

Chapter 6 Our arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services we provide

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (f))

6.1 British Council Northern Ireland is committed to ensuring that the information we disseminate and the services we provide are fully accessible to all parts of the community in Northern Ireland. We keep our arrangements under review to ensure that this remains the case.

6.2 We are aware that some groups will not have the same access to information as others.

In particular:

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

Access to information

6.3 To ensure equality of opportunity in accessing information, we provide information in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable. Where the exact request cannot be met we will ensure a reasonable alternative is provided.

Alternative formats may include, Braille, audio formats (BrowseAloud, CD, mp3), large print, or minority languages (to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language). We will respond to requests for information in alternative formats in a timely manner.

6.4 British Council Northern Ireland liaises with representatives of young people and disability and minority ethnic organisations and takes account of existing and developing good practice.

6.5 In disseminating information through the media we will seek to achieve as wide a coverage as possible across Northern Ireland.

6.6 British Council Northern Ireland uses a range of communication channels, to ensure information is available to all categories covered by Section 75, in order to mitigate the risk that any of the nine categories may not enjoy equality of opportunity, and to promote good relations.

We regularly attend careers fairs and exhibitions in order to inform the public of our services. Our Higher Education team have regular contact with universities. Our schools team attend school events and visit individual schools. On opportunities available, we also have a dedicated Northern Ireland website providing information tailored to a Northern Ireland audience <https://nireland.britishcouncil.org> we also have a dedicated school website providing in one place information on all of our opportunities for teachers and educators <http://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/> We also provide information on all of our opportunities across our social platforms on Facebook, Instagram and X.

Access to services

6.7 British Council Northern Ireland is committed to ensuring that all of our services are fully accessible to everyone in the community across the Section 75 categories.

British Council Northern Ireland also adheres to the relevant provisions of current anti-discrimination legislation.

6.8 Our services are publicised widely, including through the media outlined at 6.6 above, and on our website. Information is also available on social networking sites, such as Facebook, Instagram and a dedicated Northern Ireland X (Twitter) account [@BCouncil_NI](#). We issue regular press releases which publicise our services and provide contact details for further information (all such releases are archived on our website). The British Council's Northern Ireland Advisory Committee assists with publicising our services through their own contacts and networks.

Assessing public access to information and services

6.9 We monitor annually across all our functions, in relation to access to information and services, to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted.

6.10 British Council Northern Ireland will keep under consideration its arrangements for providing information in a range of formats. These arrangements will encompass our obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the likely demand for information in alternative formats across our programme areas, and resource implications.

Chapter 7 Timetable for measures we propose in this equality scheme

(Schedule 9 4. (3) (b))

- 7.1 Appendix 4 outlines our timetable for all measures proposed within this equality scheme. The measures outlined in this timetable will be incorporated into our business planning processes.
- 7.2 This timetable is different from and in addition to our commitment to developing action plans/action measures to specifically address inequalities and further promote equality of opportunity and good relations. We have included in our equality scheme a commitment to develop an action plan. Accordingly, this commitment is listed in the timetable of measures at Appendix 4. For information on these action measures please see above at 2.11 – 2.18.

Chapter 8 Our complaints procedure

(Schedule 9.10)

8.1 British Council Northern Ireland is responsive to the views of members of the public. We will endeavour to resolve all complaints made to us.

8.2 Schedule 9 paragraph 10 of the Act refers to complaints. A person can make a complaint to a public authority if the complainant believes he or she may have been directly affected by an alleged failure of the authority to comply with its approved equality scheme.

If the complaint has not been resolved within a reasonable timescale, the complaint can be brought to the Equality Commission.

Managers and staff will be supported in responding to complaints about equality or discrimination issues, to learn from this and to act on any learning. Complaints relating to equality and good relations will be monitored to identify recurring problem areas and British Council Northern Ireland will act on the data that emerges. Action will be included in our annual progress report.

8.3 A person wishing to make a complaint that British Council Northern Ireland has failed to comply with its approved equality scheme, or any other complaint relating to equality and good relations should contact:

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/contact/complaints>.

8.4 We will in the first instance acknowledge receipt of each complaint within 10 working days.

8.5 British Council Northern Ireland will carry out an internal investigation of the complaint and will respond substantively to the complainant within one month of the date of receiving the letter of complaint. Under certain circumstances, if the complexity of the matter requires a longer period, the period for response to the complainant may be extended to two months. In those circumstances, the complainant will be advised of the extended period within one month of making the complaint.

8.6 During this process the complainant will be kept fully informed of the progress of the investigation into the complaint and of any outcomes.

8.7 In any subsequent investigation by the Equality Commission, British Council Northern Ireland will co-operate fully, providing access in a timely manner to any relevant documentation that the Equality Commission may require.

Similarly, British Council Northern Ireland will co-operate fully with any investigation by the Equality Commission under sub-paragraph 11 (1) (b) of Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

8.8 British Council Northern Ireland will make all efforts to implement promptly and in full any recommendations arising out of any Commission investigation.

Chapter 9 Publication of our equality scheme

(Schedule 9 4.(3) (c))

9.1 British Council Northern Ireland's equality scheme is available free of charge in print form and alternative formats from:

Sarah Brisbane
Equality Manager
British Council
The Boat
49 Queen's Square
Belfast
BT1 3FG

Email sarah.brisbane@britishcouncil.org

9.2 Our equality scheme is also available on our website at:

[British Council | Northern Ireland](#)

9.3 The following arrangements are in place for the publication in a timely manner of our equality scheme to ensure equality of access:

- We will make every effort to communicate widely the existence and content of our equality scheme. This may include press releases, the internet and direct mail shots to groups representing the various categories in Section 75.
- We will email a link to our approved equality scheme to our consultees on our consultation lists that have provided email addresses. Other consultees without e-mail will be notified by letter that the scheme is available on request. We will respond to requests for the equality scheme in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within 5 working days.
- Our equality scheme is available on request in alternative formats such as Braille, large print, audio formats (mp3), and in minority languages to meet the needs of those whose first language is not English.
- Our consultees include the Northern Ireland Advisory Committee, who will receive a link to the approved scheme. This will make the equality scheme available to interested parties in our programme areas, including children and young people.

9.4 For a list of our stakeholders and consultees please see Appendix 3 of the equality scheme, or contact

Sarah Brisbane
Equality Manager
British Council
The Boat
49 Queen's Square
Belfast
BT1 3FG

Email sarah.brisbane@britishcouncil.org

Chapter 10 Review of our equality scheme

(Schedule 9 8.(3))

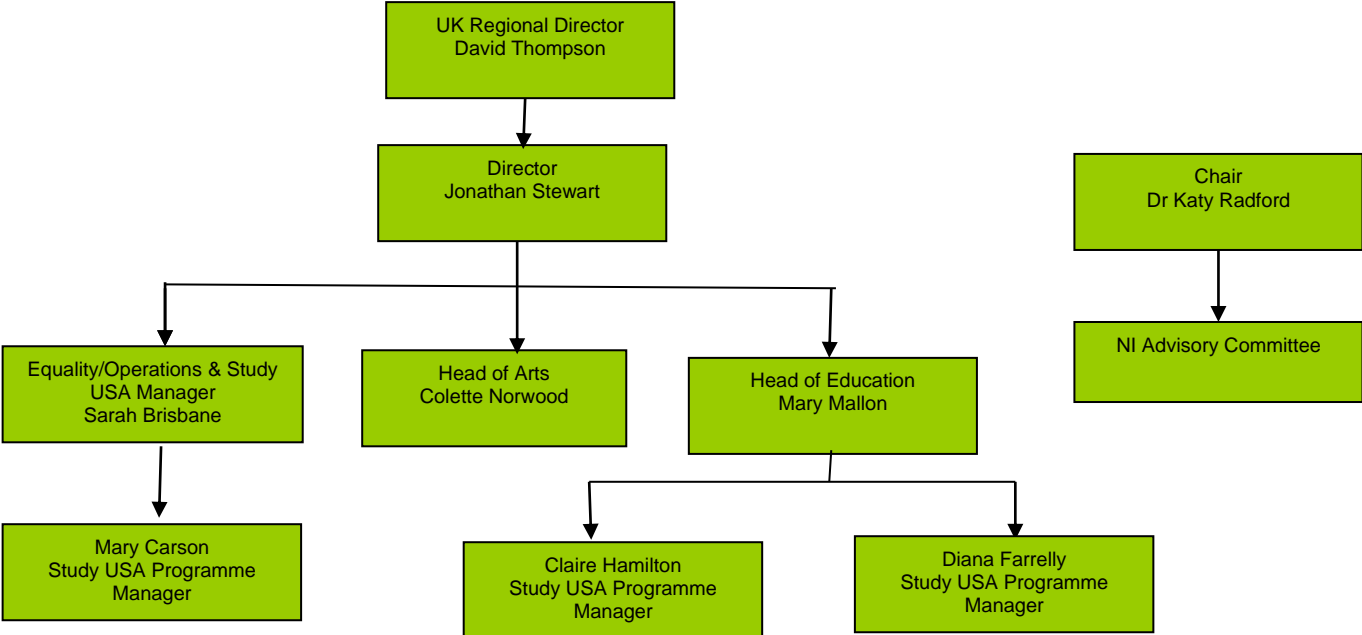
10.1 As required by Schedule 9 paragraph 8 (3) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 we will conduct a thorough review of this equality scheme. This review will take place either within five years of submission of this equality scheme to the Equality Commission or within a shorter timescale to allow alignment with the review of other planning cycles.

The review will evaluate the effectiveness of our scheme in relation to the implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties relevant to our functions in Northern Ireland.

10.2 In undertaking this review we will follow any guidance issued by the Equality Commission. A report of this review will be made available on our website, included in our Section 75 Progress Report and sent to the Equality Commission.

APPENDIX 1

BRITISH COUNCIL NORTHERN IRELAND – UK REGION MANAGEMENT AND COMMITTEE STRUCTURE



APPENDIX 2

Example groups relevant to the Section 75 categories for Northern Ireland purposes

Category	Example groups
Religious belief	<p>Buddhist; Catholic; Hindu; Jewish; Muslims, people of no religious belief; Protestants; Sikh; other faiths.</p> <p>For the purposes of Section 75, the term “religious belief” is the same definition as that used in the <i>Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order</i>. Therefore, “religious belief” also includes any <i>perceived</i> religious belief (or perceived lack of belief) and, in employment situations only, it also covers any “<i>similar philosophical belief</i>”.</p>
Political opinion	Nationalist generally; Unionists generally; members/supporters of other political parties.
Racial group	Black people; Chinese; Indians; Pakistanis; people of mixed ethnic background; Polish; Roma; Travellers; White people.
Men and women generally	Men (including boys); Trans-gendered people; Transsexual people; women (including girls).
Marital status	Civil partners or people in civil partnerships; divorced people; married people; separated people; single people; widowed people.
Age	Children and young people; older people.
Persons with a disability	Persons with disabilities as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
Persons with dependants	Persons with personal responsibility for the care of a child; for the care of a person with a disability; or the care of a dependant older person.
Sexual orientation	Bisexual people; heterosexual people; gay or lesbian people.

APPENDIX 3

List of consultees

(Schedule 9.4(2) (a))

This list is not exhaustive: additional bodies may be added during the lifetime of the scheme to reflect the establishment of new organisations.

Accredited English Language Schools (5)
African and Caribbean Support Organisation Northern Ireland (ACSONI)
Age NI
Arts and Disability Forum
Arts Council for Northern Ireland
ArtsEkta
Belfast Central Library
Belfast City Council
Belfast Islamic Centre
Belfast Metropolitan College
British Council Diversity Unit
British Council Northern Ireland staff
Cara-Friend
Centre for Global Education
Children's Law Centre
Chinese Welfare Association
Coalition on Sexual Orientation
Comhairle na Gaelscoilíochta
Committee on the Administration of Justice
CAP Arts Centre
Community Relations Council
Co-Operation Ireland
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
Council for the Homeless NI
Crescent Arts Centre
Department for Communities
Department of Education
Department for Employment & Learning
Disability Action
Disability Forum NI
Eco schools
Education Authority
Education Guidance Service for Adults
Employers for Disability NI
Equality Commission for NI
Executive Office
Gael-Linn
Gingerbread (NI)
Head of Northern Ireland Civil Service
International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE)
Inspire Wellbeing
Indian Community Centre
Linenhall Library
Members of European Parliament (3)

Members of the Legislative Assembly (all parties)
MENCAP NI
Multicultural Resource Centre
National Trust
Northern Ireland Museums Council
Northern Ireland Screen
NIACRO
NI Advisory Committee
NI Commissioner for Children and Young People
Northern Ireland Committee: Irish Congress of Trade Union (NIC-ICTU)
NI Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
NI Council for Ethnic Minorities
NI Council for Integrated Education
NI Council for Voluntary Action
NI Gay Rights Association
NI Human Rights Commission
NI Statistics and Research Agency
NI Women's Aid Federation
NUS SUI (National Union of Students NI)
Opportunity Now
Public Commercial Services Union (PCSU)
Queen's University, Belfast
Royal National Institute for Deaf People (NI)
Royal National Institute for Blind People (NI)
Rural Community Network
Save the Children
Sports NI
St. Mary's University College
Stranmillis University College
Travellers Movement Northern Ireland
The Cedar Foundation
The Bar Council
The Law Society of NI
The Verbal Arts Centre
Ulster American Folk Park
Ulster Folk and Transport Museum
Ulster Scots Agency
Ulster Orchestra Society
Ulster Historical Foundation
Ulster Peoples College
Ulster Museum
Ulster University
Women's Forum NI
Workers Educational Association
Youth Council for NI
Youth Action NI

APPENDIX 4

Timetable for measures proposed

(Schedule 9 4 (3) (b))

Measure	Lead responsibility	Timetable
Section 75 Annual Progress Report [2.7]	Equality Manager	31 August (annually)
Action plan		
Revise action plan [2.11]	Equality Manager	Annually
Consult on action plan [2.15]	Equality Manager	Quarterly
Finalised action plan published [2.18]	Equality Manager	Annually
Monitoring of progress of action plan [2.16]	Equality Manager	Annually
Consultation		
Consultation list reviewed and updated [3.4]	Equality Manager	August (annually)
Screening		
Screening timetable [4.5]	Policy decision maker, relevant team members and/or specialists	During policy development/review process
Screening reports [4.4]	Equality Manager	Quarterly
Equality Impact Assessments		
EQIA Timetable [4.16]	Decision maker, relevant team members and/or specialists	<i>As required – reported on in Annual Progress Report to ECNI</i>
Monitoring		
Review of monitoring	Equality Manager	Annually

information [4.26] Publication of monitoring information [4.31]	Equality Manager	Included in Section 75 annual progress report (August)
Training Development of summary scheme [5.4] Development of overall training programme [5.5] Focussed training [5.4] Update training [5.4] Evaluation of training [5.7]	Equality Manager Learning & Development Department/Equality Manager Learning & Development Department/Equality Manager Learning & Development Department/Equality Manager Learning & Development Department/ Equality Manager	On approval of equality scheme Prior to conducting annual EDI training On request Annually On completion of training
Assessing access to information and services Monitoring of access to information and services [6.9]	Equality Manager	Annually on completion of Section 75 progress report
Communication of equality scheme Notification of consultees [9.3]	Equality Manager	Within 3 months of scheme approval
Review of equality scheme [10.1]	Equality Manager	Within 5 years of submission

APPENDIX 5

EQUALITY SCREENING AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Introduction

Consistent with our Diversity Strategy and good practice, whenever we introduce or revise policies, or when we introduce new ways of working or deliver activities in a different way, we need to equality screen to decide if an equality impact assessment (EIA) is required. Doing so helps us consider the potential impact of what we do on different groups who are susceptible to unjustified discrimination some of whom are legally protected against this, whether by UK or other law. Crucially, it helps minimise the negative impact of our decisions and ways of working without reasonable justification. It also helps us improve equality of opportunity and foster inclusion.

The groups/characteristics

We particularly focus on: age, dependant responsibilities (with or without), disability, gender including transgender, marital status/civil partnership, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief and sexual orientation. Invariably there are other areas and characteristics to consider including full-time/part-time working, geographical location, tribe/caste/clan or language, dependent on the country.

Northern Ireland

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires the British Council, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Act. In order to comply with our obligations with regard to Section 75 **any new or revised policy which impacts on our functions in Northern Ireland must be screened using the full ESIA template.** If following the application of the impact assessment section to the policy, a major impact is identified, the policy must be subject to a more detailed equality impact assessment (EQIA) in accordance with Equality Commission guidance, 'Practical Guidance on equality impact assessment (February 2005)'

Equality screening: is an equality impact assessment (EIA)⁷ required?

A 'Yes' or 'Not sure' answer to any of the questions below means an EIA is required.

A 'No' answer to all of the questions, means an EIA is not required. The Policy Owner must confirm their agreement with the equality screening decision below. **(All policies impacting on Northern Ireland must proceed to equality impact assessment EIA)**

⁷ Equality impact assessment (EIA) should not be confused with EQIA which is a more detailed equality impact assessment (EQIA) carried out in accordance with Equality Commission guidance, 'Practical Guidance on equality impact assessment (February 2005)

Title of Policy, Function or Practice:			
Question	Please tick as required:		
	Yes	No	Not sure
Are a large number of people affected?			
Are a small number of people who are particularly under-represented, or disadvantaged, or excluded affected?			
Does the proposed policy/function/practice represent a significant change to current practice?			
Might the proposal benefit people within any of the groups identified above?			
Might the proposal disadvantage people within any of the groups identified above?			

<p>Record of Decision: I confirm an equality impact assessment is required / is not required (please delete as relevant).</p> <p>Policy Owner: _____ (Name) _____ (Role)</p> <p>Date: _____</p>
--

Note: if an equality impact assessment is required, please complete page 2 overleaf and send it with any relevant background documentation about the policy to the panel at least one full week prior to the EIA meeting. This should include the draft policy, any supporting data or relevant papers.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This section is to be completed before the EIA panel meeting and sent to the panel with the policy for them to read in advance

Take as much space as required under each heading below.

1. Title of policy / function / practice (hereafter referred to as 'policy') and name of Policy Owner

2. Background

Provide relevant background information about the policy or change.

3. Supporting data

Summarise any relevant internal or external supporting equality-related data (British Council equality monitoring data and other relevant data such as responses from staff surveys, client feedback, consultation exercises, external data or research).

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT⁸ (EIA)

To be completed at the EIA panel meeting

1. Names and roles of people in attendance

2. Potential negative impact and opportunities to promote equality

Identify areas of concern, discuss them and identify what can be done to address them. Identify too any changes that could be made to enhance equality and support inclusion. Include an additional row for any overall points if relevant. *Take as much space as required for each category discussed.*

For policies impacting on Northern Ireland, please identify whether any of the key issues identified (whether they have potential for negative impact or the opportunity to promote equality) are likely to have a MAJOR impact. In accordance with the Guide for Public Authorities, policies considered to have a major impact will depend on the following factors: if they are deemed to be significant in terms of strategic importance; if the potential equality impacts are unknown; if the potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups who are marginalised or disadvantaged.

⁸ For policies which have a major impact in Northern Ireland then wider public consultation is required. This process is set out in our Northern Ireland Equality Scheme.

Equality categories	Summary of key issues		For policies affecting Northern Ireland
	Potential for negative impact	Opportunity to promote equality and/or good relations between different groups	Please refer to the Guide for Public Authorities and identify if any of the comments may have MAJOR impact
Different ages (older, middle-aged, young adults, teenagers, children)			
Different dependant responsibilities (those with childcare, eldercare or who care for disabled people)			
Disabled people (physical, sensory, mental health or learning)			

impairments)			
Different ethnicities (majority and minority ethnic groups, including Roma people)			
Different genders (men, women, transgender)			
Different marital status (Un/married/civil partnership)			
Different political views or community backgrounds			
Pregnant, trying to get pregnant, or on maternity/ adoptive leave			
Different or no			

religious or philosophical beliefs (majority/minority/none)			
Different sexual orientations (gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual)			
British Council values (valuing people, creativity, integrity, mutuality and professionalism)			
Any additional equality grounds and/or any examples of combined grounds (such as full-time/part-time working, geographical			

location, tribe/caste/clan, language, etc.			
--	--	--	--

Policies impacting on Northern Ireland

If a MAJOR impact is identified in any of the answers above then the policy should normally be subject to a full equality impact assessment (EQIA) in line with Equality Commission Guidance on carrying out an EQIA. If the answer to the above questions is no impact then the policy should be screened out. If a minor impact is identified occasionally it may be appropriate to proceed with an EQIA. If an EQIA is not to be conducted you should consider measures that might mitigate the policy impact as well as alternative policies that might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Agreed actions (add more rows as required)

Action identified by Panel	Agreed by Policy Owner (Yes/No)	Justification if not agreed	Date implemented

4. Summary comments

5. ESIA Decision (Please outline the decision and outline your reasons for the decision)

6. Signed off by policy owner:

I confirm that the policy/function/practice has been amended if necessary and any action identified by the equality impact assessment has been implemented as detailed in the table above.

_____ (Name)

_____ (Role)

_____ (Date)

7. Record keeping

The Policy Owner (or their agent) must email the completed ESIA form to ESIA@britishcouncil.org. All policies impacting on Northern Ireland will be published on the British Council NI website as soon as possible following the completion of the ESIA process.

All policies with a MAJOR impact on equality identified in the table at Section 2 need to go through for full EQIA to comply with Northern Ireland Equality legislation.