

**SECTION 75, THE NORTHERN IRELAND ACT 1998
(THE EQUALITY DUTIES)**

SOUTHERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

**ANNUAL REPORT:
1 April 2007 – 31 March 2008**

Southern Education and Library Board's Annual Progress Report 2007-2008

Executive Summary

This Annual Report records the activities undertaken by the Board in furtherance of its equality obligations. It covers the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008.

Key Developments:-

- Inter-Board Working Group completed a proposal which outlines the structure, management and delivery of a new regional service for Traveller Education. This proposal has been submitted to the Department of Education for their consideration. (Paragraph 10(a) refers).
- Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) transformed into the Inclusion and Diversity Service, with a number of new initiatives developed. (Paragraph 7(a) refers).
- Questionnaires and Information Pack compiled on an inter-Board/CCMS/Staff Commission basis to facilitate a pilot exercise on the experiences of children and young people with disabilities of the education system. (Paragraph 11(b) refers).
- Input to the Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team (ESAIT) and the Northern Ireland Library Authority Implementation Team (NILAIT), Review of Public Administration, Human Resources Project Work. (Paragraph 11(a) refers).
- Paper drafted on the requirements for ESA and NILA in relation to Part VII of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 with regard to employment monitoring and Article 55 reviews. (Paragraphs 6(a) and 11(a) refer).
- Major seminar organised under the auspices of the Joint Consultative Forum on the Review of Public Administration. (Paragraph 9(b) refers).
- On-going EQIAs completed to Stages 4 and 5 of the process. (Paragraph 3(b) refers).
- Fundamental Service Review of Building Cleaning which included an equality component. A number of key findings addressed equality issues raised during the consultation process. (Paragraph 3(c) refers).

Main Activities Planned for 2008/09:-

- Review overall equality strategy to help inform the development of:-
 - Equality Scheme;
 - Good Relations Strategy; and
 - Disability Action Planby the new Education and Skills Authority and the Northern Ireland Library Authority.

- Progress the proposal for a regional service for Traveller Education. (Paragraph 10(a) refers).
- Complete the pilot exercise and move to the survey on the experience of children and young people with disabilities of the education system.
- Publish the results of the EQIA “Registration and Grant Aid Schemes for Local Voluntary Youth Groups”, continue work on the implementation plan therein.

INTRODUCTION

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (“the Act”) requires public authorities to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. The Southern Education and Library Board is fully committed to the fulfilment of the Section 75 obligations imposed by the Act and its Equality Scheme, approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on the 15th March 2001. This Annual Report which records the activities undertaken by the Board in furtherance of its equality obligations covers the period 1 April 2007 to 31st March 2008.

A summary of the Report will be made available to consultees and the full text will be published on the Board’s website at www.selb.org.

CONTEXT

(i) Review of Public Administration

On 22 November 2005, following the Review of Public Administration (RPA), Government announced details for the rationalisation and modernisation of the present Local Government, Health Bodies and Education administration structures. The key proposal for education was the formation of a new Education and Skills Authority (ESA) and a new Northern Ireland Library Authority (NILA). Initially it was planned that these bodies would be established by 1 April 2008. This was subsequently changed to 1 April 2009.

The outcomes of the Review Public Administration will have a major impact on the work of the Boards/Staff Commission with a priority being to assist the Department of Education, ESAIT, NILAIT and the other stakeholders to help achieve the objectives of the RPA.

The Department of Education has formed an ESA Transition Board to provide leadership and direction on convergence issues and ensure a successful transition to ESA while continuing to deliver key services effectively. The five Chief Executives of the Education and Library Boards are members of the Transition Board.

Other structures have been put in place including a HR Forum established by both ESAIT and NILAIT. The Boards/Staff Commission are represented on this by H R professionals and equality specialists. A report on this work is contained at Section 11.

(ii) New Disability Duties

Last year it was reported that because of the exceptional circumstances arising as a result of RPA the Equality Commission had granted an exemption to the Boards/Staff Commission from the requirements to produce a disability action plan. Each Board is still subject to the general duty to have due regard to the need to fulfil the above duties when carrying out its functions. Under the terms of this exemption the Board undertook to implement a programme of work and to submit to the Equality Commission a report on progress made in fulfilling these duties. The Board’s second progress report is contained at Appendix 1 of this document.

1. STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SECTION 75 EQUALITY DUTIES

The Chief Executive is responsible to the Board for ensuring that the Board fully complies

with its Equality Scheme. Each member of the Senior Management Team is responsible to the Chief Executive for ensuring that his/her Business Units fully comply with the Equality Scheme. Operational responsibility for the implementation of the Scheme rests with the Adviser for Equality, Rights and Social Inclusion, Mr Kieran Shields.

To encourage a corporate approach and the mainstreaming of equality considerations into the Board's policy-making process the following arrangements apply:-

- Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duty are incorporated into the Board's Corporate and Business Plans;
- Equality objectives are built into the performance targets of relevant staff and thereafter are reflected in the annual review/appraisal process;
- Progress reports on the implementation of the Equality Scheme are provided to the Board;
- Equality issues are considered at meetings of the Board's Senior Management Team and the Equality Group and the Corporate and Staff Development Group.

The Board has continued to work in partnership with the other Boards and the Staff Commission, which has co-ordinated work on the implementation of the Equality Scheme on an inter-Board basis.

Implementation of the Equality Scheme is a standard item of business on the agenda for the monthly meetings of the Boards' Chief Administrative Officers.

The DE/NDPB Liaison Group did not meet during the year.

The DCAL/NDPB Liaison Group met on two occasions.

During the reporting year the partnership work on-going with the community and voluntary and trade union sectors over the past five years continued as evidenced by the work of the Joint Consultation Forum.

2. SCREENING

(a) New Policies Screened

A supplementary report on new policies screened during the period 2006 – 2007 was issued to consultees on the 27 September 2007. For the period April 2007 – March 2008 the position is as detailed in the Equality Commission's template at Appendix 2.

3. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EQIA)

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Programme

(a) Department of Education led EQIAs

The Department has conducted a re-screening exercise in relation to its EQIA programme and had indicated that, during April 2007, it intended to send out an analysis document detailing the responses received from consultees and the Department's response to them. The document was to include a revised timetable for any equality impact assessments. Consultations between the Department and the Equality Commission on this revised timetable continued during the year. The Department intends to consult on a rolling basis on new policies screened.

(b) Inter-Board/Staff Commission led EQIAs

The action plan for the period April 2006 – March 2008 recommended the completion to Stage 4 of the EQIAs on:

- Implementation of the Job Evaluation Schemes
- Registration and Grant Aid Schemes for Local Voluntary Youth Groups

During the reporting year the following progress was made:-

Policy: Implementation of the Job Evaluation Schemes

This EQIA is at stage 4 of the process. At the time of writing this report consultation events were being organised.

Policy: Registration and Grant Aid Schemes for Local Voluntary Youth Groups

This EQIA is at stage 5 of the process. The publication of this EQIA has generated considerable interest with 100+ written responses being received at the pre-consultation stage and around 39 during the formal consultation stage. The draft report on the findings of the EQIA is currently being considered by the Boards.

The original timeframe for the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority was such that it was unlikely that there would be an opportunity to fully implement the findings of the above EQIAs. However, given that the EQIA on the Registration and Grant Aid Schemes is currently at Stage 5 of the process, the Boards have established an Inter-Board Implementation Group to take forward the findings in consultation with the ESA Implementation Team.

(c) Fundamental Service Review of Building Cleaning

The Fundamental Review of Building Cleaning within the five Education and Library Boards took place over the period January to December 2007 and examined the whole range of activities of the service. From the information gathered, a series of recommendations was made to improve the service delivery and to move towards a single service provider across Northern Ireland.

Specific areas of the review comprised consultation with stakeholders, finance and procurement, staffing and operational activities and partnership arrangements. Compliance with Section 75 and the promotion of equality were identified as key aspects of consultation

with stakeholders. Feedback was obtained through a series of questionnaire surveys, meetings and focus groups. Key findings included:

- The surveys of cleaning staff, school principals and school governors demonstrate high levels of satisfaction. Between 100% and 97% of respondents believe there are no adverse impacts in the way in which equality issues are managed by the Cleaning Service.
- From the perspective of ethnic background, 3.7% of the workforce is not of British or Irish identity and trend data suggest that this percentage is increasing due to the major increase of foreign nationals moving into Northern Ireland. Proposals to increase the sense of belonging for foreign nationals have been made as part of the review.
- The workforce has a high percentage of female staff (84.3%) and recommendations have been made to try to reduce this imbalance. It might be that developments in education and changes in working patterns will encourage a greater number of male applicants for available posts.
- Very few cleaners (1%) have a disability, according to the staff survey. Suggestions have been put forward to adopt good practice, as endorsed by Disability Action, to try to redress this imbalance.
- 23.5% of cleaning staff have caring responsibilities, for which the part-time and flexible nature of the job is undoubtedly a contributing factor. The report has stressed the importance of ensuring a suitable work-life balance to ensure the retention of people with such responsibilities.
- The profile of cleaning staff shows that 74.1% are aged 41 or more and recommendations to establish a workforce planning process have been incorporated into the report.

Ongoing EQIA Monitoring Activities – April 2007 – March 2008

(d) Progress Report on the Implementation of Actions as a result of the EQIA “Electronic Libraries for Northern Ireland (ELFNI)”

The Electronic Libraries for Northern Ireland programme has established an Intelligent Customer Unit (ICU) to manage the services on behalf of the 5 Education and Library Boards. A major function of the ICU has been to ensure a robust Benefits Realisation Process is established and as part of that objectives have been set in line with the result of the ELFNI Equality Impact assessment. This process is monitored by the ELFNI Contract Executive. An update of progress on actions to date as a result of this EQIA is attached in Appendix 3.

(e) Progress Report on the Implementation of Actions as a result of the EQIA “Code of Procedures for Recruitment, Selection and Promotion and Internal Trawl Procedure”

The implementation of the Policy on the Control of Vacancies had significant implications for the outworking of the findings of this EQIA to the extent that to fulfil the Policy and the Public Service Commission’s Guiding Principle No.2 on Managing Vacancies Effectively restrictions were placed on recruitment. In next year’s report which will be the final report on the Board’s Equality Scheme a detailed analysis will be provided on the current state of play on the implementation of the findings of this EQIA.

(f) Work-life Balance Policies

The findings of this review have been fully implemented.

2008 – 09 EQIA Timetable

At this stage there are no EQIAs due to commence during April 2008– March 2009.

4. TRAINING

The Board would wish to highlight the following training initiatives which occurred during the year:-

Equality Awareness - Section 75

During the year equality awareness programmes for new and existing staff continued. A specific programme was designed for library staff at the request of the Libraries Service to include a more detailed briefing on the new Disability Discrimination legislation. 15 library staff were trained on the 29th February 2008.

Equality Awareness - Recruitment and Selection

On an inter-Board basis there were two training sessions for new panel members (22 participants). This training included guidance on the provisions of the Code, the Boards’ Equal Opportunities Policy and the legislative provisions related to the promotion of equality of opportunity, equality awareness and good practice as it relates to recruitment and selection.

5. COMMUNICATION

The methods used to communicate progress on the implementation of our Equality Scheme during this period were as follows:-

- Regular reports to Board members.
- Reports on progress to the Joint Consultative Forum and those on our Equality Scheme lists;
- Face to face contacts through consultation events; and
- Information published on our website.

The impact/success of the approach adopted by the Boards/Staff Commission has been positive. The community/voluntary and trade union sectors have acknowledged that it has allowed them to actively participate in the implementation of our Equality

Schemes.

6. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

(a) Transfer of Employment Monitoring Data

ESA, when established, will be the largest employer in Northern Ireland. The transfer of employment monitoring data for around 30,000 staff from 12 organisations will require careful planning to enable ESA to complete its annual monitoring return. The Boards/Staff Commission drafted a paper, in partnership with the ESA and NILA HR Managers and in consultation with the legacy organisations and the Equality Commission on the requirements of ESA and NILA under Part VII of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order (FETO) 1998. (Paragraph 11 refers).

The paper examines the issues to be considered by both ESA and NILA to enable them to fulfil their legal obligations under FETO, in regard to:-

- Registration
- Employment Monitoring
- Transfer of Data
- New Recruits, Pro forma Employment Monitoring Form
- Article 55 Review

(b) Data Requirements and Data Collection

As part of its IT procurement cycle, NILA organised a series of workshops to develop a Statement of User Requirements (SOUR) for an Integrated Finance and HR/Payroll system. The Boards/Staff Commission contributed to the SOUR for the HR system. The Boards/Staff Commission highlighted the importance of developing a system capable of collecting employment monitoring data for employees and applicants which would enable NILA to meet its requirements in terms of policy review and analysis under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

(c) Schools Data

An issue which emerged at an early stage of the survey aimed at collecting information from children and young people with disabilities on their experience of the education system was the identification of such pupils within the system.

The current data is based on the classification of pupils in accordance with the "Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs".

The Department of Education is currently working with schools, through the schools census to obtain more information on children with disabilities within the system. Some schools have experienced difficulties with the definitions; these have now been further defined. It is anticipated that more meaningful data on this ground will emerge but at this early stage of the process it remains unreliable.

(d) Geographical Information Systems (GIS)

GIS is a means of displaying youth service data on a geographical basis rather than presenting statistical summaries. The Boards provide the Youth Council with statistical data related to various characteristics of both voluntary registered and controlled youth groups.

The analysed data is compiled into tailored reports which provide statistical and mapped information on:-

- types of youth provision;
- profile of youth service membership; and
- distribution of provision.

The Youth Service data is integrated with demographic data and analysed by age group and geographical area. This data has proved extremely beneficial in addressing statistical and geographical queries re New TSN, Section 75 – EQIAs etc.

In 2007 a consultation exercise was carried out by an independent consultant reporting to the GIS Working Group to determine statistical requirements for a management information system for the Youth Service. This included consultations with the main stakeholders of Youth Service statistical data i.e. the five Education and Library Boards, Department of Education and Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations. The main thrust of the proposals was to:-

- collect data commensurate with size and level of funding of units of Youth Service provision, recommending a web-based data collection model in order to systematically capture data at regular intervals so that future information produced will enable effective targeting, monitoring and accountability within ESA;
- the harmonisation of management information systems across the Education and Library Boards, Youth Council and the voluntary sector.

The latest recommendations are currently under consideration by the GIS Working Group.

7. INFORMATION PROVISION AND ACCESS TO SERVICES

(a) Access to Services

In 2007 an Ethnic-Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) was established. This regional service was responsible for the following:-

- Providing access to interpreting services;
- Providing translations of important documents, in various languages, for teachers, pupils and their parents;
- Developing a website which will give pupils and their parents information about schooling and the curriculum in Northern Ireland, along with translations of important documents;
- Using 'Information Communication Technology' (ICT) to support the learning needs of pupils whose first language is not English; and
- Producing relevant software through the wide range of facilities available in the 'Learning Northern Ireland' (LNI) package.

This year EMAS was transformed into the Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS) which is an amalgamation of the previous EAL/Ethnic Minority Teams from the Education and Library Boards. The Service supports schools in providing for the needs of pupils and parents for whom English is not the first language.

During the year it has been responsible for the:

- Establishment of Inclusion and Diversity Service.
- Establishment and roll-out of the pilot Diversity Coordinator initiative.
- Launch of the **Together Towards Inclusion: a Toolkit for Diversity in the Primary School** by Minister of Education, N.I and Minister of Integration, Republic of Ireland.
- Roll out of phase one, Regional Primary Inset Programme.
- Post-Primary Development and roll-out of Inset.
- Establishment of Translation and Interpreting Service.
- Board of Governor Training.
- Establishment of partnerships with NGOs and other educational institutions.

(b) Information Provision

As a result of outreach work with Disability Groups the number of people with disabilities participating in, for example, the Joint Consultative Forum has increased substantially. Requests for information in alternative formats e.g., Braille have been met together with other specific needs.

Signer/Interpreter services have also been provided to deaf parents of children in schools to facilitate parental involvement in transfer arrangements, teacher – parent interviews and parental contact with staff from Educational Psychology Service, SEN and Education Welfare.

A menu of provisions is in place to facilitate access to services. They include:-

- Information can be provided on computer disc;
- Information can be provided in Braille (a Braille printer and reader has been installed at Armagh library);
- Information can be provided on audio cassette. An inter-Board/Staff Commission agreement exists with Armagh Talking Newspapers for the provision of a reader service;
- A textphone has been put in place to facilitate contact with members of the public with regard to all the functions of the Board;
- The website has been updated on an on-going basis including the development of 'Browse-Aloud' software on the main board web pages. This has helped to ensure that it is in compliance with good access standards for people with disabilities. Other accessibility features include skip links, speech enabled sections, variable text size, access keys and text only options;
- Equality pages for the website have been created and are regularly updated. These cover equal opportunities and human resources, equality, rights and social inclusion. Specific articles on Traveller education and good relations are posted on the home page throughout the year.

(c) The Board provided translation and interpreting for parents and children across a range of services in the following languages:

INTERPRETING / TRANSLATION COSTS

Language	Translation	Interpreting
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	£	£
Polish	5247	485
Portuguese	2500	174
Lithuanian	2094	612
Slovakian	1009	0
Russian	29	394
Other	358	438
Total	11237	2103

(d) Specialist Support

Board Services assisted families with specific language support needs including specialist interpreting for complex assessments and parental support meetings.

The Autism Advisory and Intervention Service provided with a Portuguese child and his family with translations of relevant service documents and employed an interpreter for meetings and home visits. Leaflets and forms for training courses were also translated for parents to complete. The service was also involved in the assessment of a young Polish child at the Multi-disciplinary Assessment clinic. The clinic ensured that a Polish Paediatrician was present to interpret throughout the complex diagnostic process.

The Education Welfare Service pays for interpreters to help them in their work with parents and children in two main areas: helping parents to find schools for children and dealing with non attendance issues.

(e) Access to music services

Broadening access to music for children and young people with disabilities was achieved through the delivery of the 'My Music' project in Lisanally, Rathore Special Schools and St Colman's Abbey Special Unit. Roadshow concerts also provided important live music experiences. The full SELB youth orchestra and samba band worked with 10 schools in presenting concerts to over 2700 pupils including a Christmas performance at Lisanally Special School in Armagh.

The annual Summer School continued to provide access to students who were not already registered with the Music Service including students with disabilities.

(f) Disability Access:

<i>Capital Expenditure - Disabled Access</i>	<i>2007/2008 total</i>
<i>Schools</i>	<i>£623K</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>£623K</i>

8. COMPLAINTS

No complaints were received during the previous year.

9. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The Boards/Commission have an agreed strategy in place to facilitate individuals and groups affected by existing or proposed policies to engage in the decision making process. Consultation events were organised on the new Disability Duties, equality impact assessments and the impact of the review of public administration. Two major events are highlighted below.

(a) New Disability Duties

In June 2007 the Boards/Staff Commission organised a consultation event in partnership with Disability Action/Mencap. It was attended by a number of groups representing people with disabilities.

Its primary purpose was to have a targeted consultation event on the Boards'/Staff Commission's proposals for implementing the new Disability Duties in advance of a discussion at the JCF. The event was very successful; more information is contained at Appendix 1.

(b) Joint Consultative Forum (JCF)

The Joint Consultative Forum, established by the Boards/Commission in partnership with NICEM, is an important lynchpin in ensuring effective engagement with the community, voluntary and trade union sectors. Indeed, it adds considerable value, due to the diversity of the group, to engagements and consultations. The primary item of business continued to be the implications of the Review of Public Administration on the education sector.

For this reason during the year the Joint Consultative Forum organised a major seminar on the Review of Public Administration 'Education'. It took place on 18 October 2007 at Lisburn Civic Centre, attended by sixty participants. The Minister had originally agreed to address the Forum but unfortunately had been unable to attend due to Assembly business. The agenda included an update on the implementation of the Review of Public Administration from an education perspective; discussion on the review of the effectiveness of Section 75 and outworking of the new Disability Duties. A report of the seminar was compiled and circulated to Forum members, the Department of Education, the Equality Commission and the Public Service Commission. It is available on the Staff Commission's website at www.staffcom.org.uk.

10. THE GOOD RELATIONS DUTY

The Boards'/Staff Commission's Good Relations Strategy is cited by the Equality Commission as an example of good practice in its Good Relations Guide.

Progress on a number of initiatives is detailed below:-

(a) Traveller Education

In December 2007 the Department of Education contacted the Association of Chief Executives to identify the most appropriate mechanism to establish a regional model for service delivery within Traveller Education. Further to this request to develop a coherent approach to Traveller education provision, the Inter-Board Senior Education Officers agreed to establish an inter-board working group to take this forward. The working

group completed a proposal which outlines the structure, management and delivery of a new regional service for Traveller Education and this has been approved by the five Boards and submitted to the Department for their consideration.

The Department has also recently drafted a revised Circular on Traveller Education to replace the 1993/37 Circular as the guidance note for education authorities and schools in Northern Ireland. The five Boards have used this draft Circular as the starting point for devising a proposed new model of service delivery for Traveller Education which has been included in the proposal sent to the Department. The new Inter-Board approach will commence in the 2008/9 financial year.

(b) Cross Border Education Workshop

The Boards/Staff Commission are part of a process for the development of a Cross Border Plan for Social Inclusion. As part of this process a workshop was organised in January 2008 to focus on Cross Border Educational Co-operation in respect of five educational settings, namely:-

- Care and Pre-Primary Level;
- Primary Level;
- Post Primary Level;
- Third Level;
- Learning Disabilities.

There was consensus that the following actions were required to be taken to promote educational inclusion on a cross border basis:-

- Agree Cross Border framework for Qualifications/Equivalencies;
- Establish a Cross Border Network or base to co-ordinate dissemination of resources/best practice;
- Commission, research, audit and evaluation to:
 - a. identify existing assessment and intervention provision which address social, emotional and behavioural difficulties that result in educational under-achievement at both pre-school and primary level;
 - b. establish the needs of excluded groups with regard to educational provisions;
 - c. identify models of best practice;
 - d. identify models of cost effectiveness;
- Co-ordinate and integrate the community/voluntary sector input to educational provision;
- Develop shared measurable outcomes/benefit measure to establish effectiveness of existing educational provision across the five settings;
- Develop a strategy to focus on/tackle educational under-achievement, illiteracy and educational exclusion; and
- Develop and co-ordinate arrangements in relation to child protection/vetting.

A number of Boards and the Staff Commission are members of a Cross Border Working Group appointed to take this initiative forward.

(b) Inter-community good relations

In December 2007 SELB staff from the Education Welfare Service, the Prince's Trust and local schools in Dungannon designed a programme to involve young people from the local community and new nationals working together to undertake an identified project. Drumglass High School, St Joseph's College Coalisland, St Patrick's College Dungannon and the Integrated College identified 12 young people who would benefit from inter community cooperation.

The Programme included team building, interaction via sport, skill development via scenarios and creative art. This resulted in the creation of a Stained Glass for the Mayor of Dungannon and South Tyrone District Council which represented all of the cultures, feeling and wishes of the group. The young people also spent two days together on a residential in Scotland, resulting in religious, cultural exchange and sharing of experiences. The group's achievements were celebrated during a local event at which the Lord Mayor was presented with the Stained glass art work as undertaken by participants. The participating schools and SELB staff are using this positive experience to plan further good relations activity in the next school year.

11. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

(a) Review of Public Administration - Implementation Process

The Boards/Staff Commission are involved in a range of projects aimed at implementing the RPA proposals for the creation of a new Education and Skills Authority (ESA) and new Northern Ireland Library Authority (NILA).

Developing ESA

At the time of writing this report a series of ESAIT workshops are taking place with an agenda to develop the vision and objectives for service under ESA.

Workshops planned include:-

- Youth Services
- Corporate Development
- Infrastructure and Procurement
- Human Resources
- Children's Services
- Education Quality and Financial Report

Four focus groups to hear the views of principals and specific sessions for Chief Executives, Senior Managers and Trade Unions are also planned.

Through the above workshops and other fora the Boards/Staff Commission have indicated that it is important that Section 75 Equality Duties and the new Disability Duties are mainstreamed at a corporate level, with employment equality issues being addressed through the HR function.

To date a range of employment equality issues have been addressed through the HR Forum. This work has involved:-

- Participation in a HR workshop organised by ESAIT in September 2007 to address:-
 - › Business continuity and service delivery;
 - › Impact of equality on the transition and implementation of ESA; and
 - › Key HR issues for consideration in the transition and implementation of ESA.

Feedback from this workshop was used to inform a programme of work of the ESAIT HR project, including the Project Initiation Document and Human Resources Principles and Policies Document.

- A review of the Vacancy Control Policy. Boards had been experiencing difficulties in recruiting certain posts e.g., Educational Psychologists, Education Welfare Officers, Youth Workers and Clerical Officers. In September 2007 the policy was reviewed to facilitate the filling of the above mentioned vacancies on a permanent basis by public advertisement with the exception of clerical officers which would continue to be recruited on a temporary basis up to 31 March 2009 with the possibility of extension.
- Contributing to the development of the draft H R Principles and Policies document. This document has been developed by ESAIT to focus on the issues arising from the establishment of ESA as a new organisation and not on the wider changes that may take place across the sector.
- The Boards have assisted ESAIT and NILA in the collection and analysis of information on employment policies, practices and terms and conditions of employment, including employment equality policies. This detailed work is required to identify harmonisation and protection issues for existing Board staff and the development of terms and conditions of service for new staff to be employed by ESA. This process has involved the examination of all employment equality policies.

ESA/NILA Implementation Issues

- Boards are co-operating with Price Waterhouse Coopers who have been appointed to review pension arrangements and to present options which would be appropriate for ESA/NILA.
- Boards contributed to the development of a paper to examine the requirement of Part VII of the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, as amended, with regard to employment monitoring and Article 55 reviews and the issues to be considered in the establishment of both ESA and NILA to enable them to fulfil these legal obligations. (Paragraph 6(a) refers).

Developing NILA

- Boards input to NILA's IT Support Systems Project aimed at specifying the requirement of an Integrated Finance and HR/Payroll system; in particular the importance of building capacity for employment equality monitoring. (Paragraph 6(b) refers).
- NILAIT has also established a HR Consultative Forum, which includes representatives of

- NILAIT has commenced work, in consultation with the Boards, in relation to location issues. This work will take account of the guidance issued by the Department of Finance and Personnel on location of public sector jobs. The guidance requires that equality impacts are addressed as part of this process.

(b) Experiences of Children and Young People with Disabilities of the Education System

In June 2007, a consultation event was organised in partnership with Disability Action and Mencap by the Staff Commission and the five Boards. The purpose of the event was to discuss the Boards'/Staff Commission's programme of work arising from the new Disability Duties. A recommendation which emerged from this event was that information should be collected from children and young people with disabilities on their experience of the education system. This was considered by the Boards' Chief Administrative Officers and it was agreed to move this proposal forward on a partnership basis with the five Boards, CCMS and the Staff Commission.

The aim and objectives of the survey are set out below:-

Aim of the Research:

To gather information from children and young people with disabilities on their experience of the education system.

Objectives:

- to collect information from children and young people with disabilities on their experience of the education system;
- to identify good practice from their experiences within the school system;
- to identify difficulties and challenges children and young people with disabilities may have faced;
- to utilise the information collected to inform policy development.

It was agreed that structured questionnaires would be used to collect information. These would be distributed through the school system. Given the age range and different experiences at the various levels of education, three questionnaires were devised. They targeted:-

- i) pupils at primary level;
- ii) pupils at key stage 3;
- iii) pupils at key stage 4

In addition an information pack was compiled. It included:-

- a) briefing paper explaining the rationale for the survey and the approach being adopted;
- b) standard letters seeking parental consent;
- c) copies of the questionnaires and covering letters for post primary pupils only;
- d) advice for SENCO or nominated person in the school.

Copies of the questionnaires and information pack are obtainable on request from the Staff Commission.

Pilot Exercise

A small number of primary and post primary schools in the controlled and maintained sectors and special schools were invited to participate in the pilot exercise which will involve:-

- a) obtaining parental consent for children with a statement of special educational needs to participate in the pilot exercise in the school concerned;
- b) the issue of the questionnaire to the child/children in the school with a statement of special educational needs;
- c) the offer of assistance to the child/children completing the questionnaire;
- d) completion by the school of the final section of the questionnaire; and
- d) the return of all completed questionnaires to the designated Board/CCMS Officer.

It is anticipated that the first part of the pilot exercise, namely completion of the questionnaires at school level, will be completed by June 2008. The aim of the pilot exercise is primarily to test the questionnaires and methodology to be used. It is important to note that any school participating in the pilot exercise will not be asked to be involved in any further exercises.

Benefits/Outcomes

It is anticipated that the survey will enable:-

1. children with disabilities to be given an opportunity to record their experiences at school. Such information will ultimately help inform education policy;
2. schools to obtain an indication of the extent to which children with disabilities feel part of the education system. Feedback will be provided to all participating schools on the outcome of the research;
3. improvements to be made in the collection of data on children with disabilities;
4. the outworking of the vision for education which is ...*"to educate and develop the young people of Northern Ireland to the highest possible standards, providing equality of access for all"*. The information which emerges from the research project will be used to help inform education policy;
5. the Boards/CCMS to demonstrate that through partnership working with schools equality can be mainstreamed.

A full report on the implementation of the Boards' programme of work arising from the implementation of the Disability Duties is contained at Appendix 1.

(b) Section 75 work including young people with dependents

The School Age Mothers (S.A.M.) Project was established to support young women who were pregnant or who have a baby whilst of compulsory school age to continue their education and at the same time have their personal development, antenatal and health care needs addressed. It was set up specifically to address the issue of young women who leave school each year around the time they become pregnant. Within the Southern Education Library Board (SELB) the School Age Mothers (S.A.M) Project was established up in March 2003. Essentially the project provides both individual and group support to young women of compulsory school age, 16 and under or those young women in mainstream education up to

age 19 who are pregnant or who have a child to help them continue their education. The project worker also offers limited support through a one off visit to anyone referred to the project who is in further education and will direct them to the relevant agencies where they can access support.

The SAM Project received seventy six referrals to date this year, fifty one of these were for young women in mainstream education and they are receiving ongoing support through the project. As well as the individual support we also provide group support. Group work sessions with other young women in the same situation are held regularly during school holidays and a summer programme. These events have included the Cook It! Programme, baby massage; first aid; baby play day; healthy eating; sexual health; and relaxation for mums. Transport, childcare and lunch are provided for these sessions. Peer support is very important to the young women. Many of the young women expressed how they would encourage other young mums to participate in the programme. We know that the young parents that participate in the project face a wide range of difficulties. These include deciding where they are going to live, managing on a very limited income, understanding and learning how to work their way through a whole range of different systems, and looking after their child's needs as well as their own needs. These young women are also at a higher risk of experiencing poor health and poverty. The SAM Project is an opportunity for the project to touch on some of these issues and raise awareness with the young women.

(c) SELB Youth Service Inclusion Unit

The youth service once again completed a full year of youth development work aimed at supporting children and young people from within the Section 75 groupings and to promote equality, rights and social inclusion across society. The following excerpts from their annual report provide a snapshot of the broad range of programmes delivered in the past 12 months:

Banbridge ADHD Project

The aim of this project was to provide a means of promoting the personal development of young people and to equip them with the knowledge, skill and understanding that enables them to better manage their condition. The group consisted of seven young men ranging from thirteen to seventeen years old, all of whom have been formally diagnosed with ADHD.

Newry Junior Gateway Club

The club was established as a pilot by the SELB Youth Service Inclusion Unit and Face Inclusion Matters in response to a decision taken by Newry Gateway Club to have separate provision for under 18 year olds. The club has just completed phase one of the Creativity Included Project.

Munia Beoir

'Munia Beoir' which means good women is the title of a multi-media arts exhibition developed by a group of young women from the traveller community in Newry and Mourne as part of Anti-Bullying Week 2007. The Theme – 'Race faith & Culture'. The young women explored ideas relating to; culture, identity, the home, journeys and dreams. They experimented with photography, digital animation, image theatre and concept of language and text as art to create an animation, a series of photographs and corresponding statements and truisms that respond to and address issues that relate to bullying and discrimination. The project recently

won the top Inclusion award at the third Annual Northern Ireland Youth Awards 2008, held in Lisburn in the presence of the Minister for Education Caitriona Ruane.



Dungannon Anti-Bullying Project

This twelve week project consisted of a group of eight young people from the Dungannon area. The project reflected and researched the impacts of bullying on young people due to their race, faith and culture. The young people used drama as a tool explore and examine these impacts and produced their findings through a powerful DVD in their attempts to promote anti-bully policy and practice within their youth club.

Cookstown Youth Included Project

Youth Included was a project delivered in partnership between the SELB Youth Service and Cookstown and District Disability Forum to a group of young people from the Cookstown area aged 14 to 20 years. The twelve week project utilised arts as a tool which provided young people with different abilities with quality personal development opportunities that enhanced their creative skills, artistic ability, innovation, problem solving, self expression, project planning personal confidence and social interaction. The project also developed and sustained partnerships between young people, the SELB Youth Service and Cookstown and District Disability Forum.

Taghnevan Saturday Integrated Club

From February 2008 to April 2008 eight young people aged 7 to 12 years with aspergers syndrome from the Craigavon area have completed participating in a pilot partnership project aimed to give young people with aspergers syndrome the opportunity to participate in taster art and sporting activities. Based in Taghnevan Youth Club, Lurgan, eight 'buddies' from the Youth Club aged 12 to 15 years also attended to befriend and support the children. The project organised and supported by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust, the Southern Education and Library Board Youth Service, SELB Creative Youth Partnership, Craigavon Council sports section and a parent developed from a growing response for a structured social outlet for children with AS along side a review and evaluation of Autistic Spectrum Disorders/ Aspergers by Southern Health and Social Care Trust Craigavon/ Banbridge Locality November 2007 and NICCY's Aspergers Report March 2007.



LGBT Newry

Young people were recruited from local communities in Newry City to plan the content of a DVD to challenge homophobia which was subsequently produced and presented to full time youth workers at their annual conference.

Kids on the Block

This was a disability awareness project aimed at children of primary school age. Twelve summer schemes involving 235 children took part in the workshops. Children interacted with three foot tall colourful puppet characters which modelled relationships between people both with and without disabilities by using frank and often numerous communications of facts and feeling between the puppet characters and the audience. This was followed by a guided question and answer session where the young people explored issues raised.

Youth Service Training

Deaf Awareness & Communication Skills Course

This was delivered to 5 part-time staff / volunteers from the SELB area in partnership with the Southern Health Trust Sensory Disability Team. Participants gained an understanding of legislation and how to identify young people with a hearing loss and their communication needs. They were also equipped with practical tools to enable them to communicate clearly and recognise different communication methods.

Inclusive Games Training

This training course was designed in partnership with Disability Sports NI to provide participants with knowledge to run practical activity sessions in a range of inclusive games including; Boccia, Goal Ball, Kurling and Zone Hockey. This training was delivered to 14 part-time staff and 14 full time staff last year.

Disability Awareness Training

This training was delivered to 37 members of the Outdoor Education Sector including, part

time staff, volunteers and young people from the SELB area in partnership with Disability Sports NI, Enable NI and Downs Syndrome Association. Participants explored issues in relation to inclusion and were made aware of current disability legislation and identified and explored practical ideas, methods and tools to ensure inclusive practice and participation. The training was also delivered to 17 part-time staff / leaders / Volunteers from youth clubs from the SELB area of remit.

A Shared Future

Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland; Training was delivered over 2 half days to SELB professional youth workers. Duncan Morrow, Chief Executive of the Community Relations Council provided input with the focus on current practice, critical reflection and the challenges of developing community relations work within their practice.

Appendix 1

Disability Duties

1. How many action measures for this reporting period have been?

3

**Fully
Achieved**

1

**Partially
Achieved**

**Not
Achieved**

2. Please outline the following detail 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	<p>The Staff Commission/Boards are non-departmental public bodies and therefore have a very limited involvement in public life appointments.</p> <p>The Boards have no power to appoint members to their own Board and their powers in respect of Boards of Governors are very limited.</p> <p>Because of their limited role in public appointments the Staff Commission/Boards have taken a wide interpretation of the term public life positions and have included groups over which they have influence or a direct relationship.</p>		

Regional ^{iv} Local ^v	Joint Consultative Forum	When conducting targeted consultation events consultees were informed about the role and function of the JCF and encouraged to participate.	Significant increase in number of people with disabilities participating in the work of the JCF. This is evidenced by an increase in Braille and Sign Translation.
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2(b) What training action measures were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Conduct an examination of training and guidance provided on the promotion of equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.	Review conducted. Report available.	Disability awareness training provided to Commission staff by Cedar Foundation. A specific programme was designed for library staff at the request of the Libraries Service to include a more detailed briefing on the new Disability Discrimination legislation. 15 library staff were trained on disability awareness by SELB staff on the 29 th February 2008.

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	Organise a joint seminar with Section 75 Groups to: (i) explore how public life positions could be made more accessible to and inclusive of	In consultation with the Disability Groups it was agreed that, in the first instance, a targeted consultation event should take place with disability groups and people with disabilities followed by a	Support for the implementation of the Boards'/Staff Commission's Interim Disability Action Plan. Disability Action, commenting on the interim action plan stated 'we commend your interim action plan for its clarity, consensus and for its inclusion of key outcomes'.

<p>people with disabilities;</p> <p>(ii) examine how to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people;</p> <p>(iii) identify measures which could be considered for inclusion in the disability action plan for ESA</p>	<p>discussion with Section 75 groups at the Joint Consultative Forum (JCF). The consultation event took place on the 12 June 2007. A report of the event was issued to consultees. <i>(Report available)</i></p> <p>An update on the consultation event was contained in the August 2007 JCF Quarterly Report circulated to forum members.</p> <p>A progress report on action points arising out of the consultation meeting was also circulated in September 2007 to consultees who had attended the June event.</p> <p>The Disability Duties was an agenda item at the Joint Consultative Forum Seminar which took place on 18 October 2007. <i>(Report available)</i></p> <p>Action on this measure was deferred to the period April 2008/March 2009. This item was considered at the JCF seminar on the 13 May 2008.</p>	<p>Arising from the consultation event the Boards/Staff Commission undertook to consider conducting a survey to collect information from children and young people with disabilities on their experience of the education system. A research proposal was drafted and endorsed by the five Boards/CCMS and the Staff Commission. A more detailed report is available at 11(b) of the Boards'/ Staff Commission's 2007/08 Annual Report to the Equality Commission. At the consultation event the role and functions of the JCF were explained. As a result participation by people with disabilities in the Forum has increased significantly.</p>
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2 (d) What action measures were achieved to 'encourage others' to promote the two duties:

Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
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	<p>Review measures already taken and/or proposed to promote equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.</p>	<p>Review conducted – Report available on www.staffcom.org.uk</p>	<p>Disability equality promoted through changes to:-</p> <p>The Screening Pro forma which now includes a specific follow-up question on disability equality:-</p> <p>‘Consider whether the policy:</p> <p>i) discourages disabled people from participating in public life and fails to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people;</p> <p>ii) provides an opportunity to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people or encourages their participation in public life”</p> <p><i>The amended screening pro forma was introduced with effect from April 2007.</i></p> <p>The Job Sharing Scheme was extended to provide that it can also be used to “allow current employees with short-term and long-term illnesses, or who develop disabilities to keep working and provide employment opportunities for disabled people generally”. Also:-</p> <p>increased flexibility to work alternative work patterns; and</p> <p>pilot exercise on teleworking conducted.</p>
2	<p>Identify the current public life positions, if any, under the remit of the Boards/Staff Commission. If such positions exist:-</p> <p>(i) Examine how appointments are made to such public life positions</p>	<p>Review conducted – Report available on www.staffcom.org.uk</p>	<p>The Boards/Staff Commission, because of their limited role in public appointments, have taken a wide interpretation of this term and have included groups over which they have influence or a direct relationship. For example due to outreach work there has been increased participation by people with disabilities in the JCF with specific requirements being fully met e.g., sign</p>

(ii) Explore how disabled people could be encouraged to apply for such positions		translation and information in Braille.
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2 (e) Please outline any additional action measures that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1	N/A		

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

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones ¹ / Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	N/A			

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

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	An anticipated outcome from the review of public life positions was the development of a draft good practice guide for consideration by ESA.	The Staff Commission/Boards have concluded that it is inappropriate to develop a good practice guide for consideration by ESA as such guidance already exists under the auspices of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments and also because of their limited role in such appointments, paragraph 2(d)(2) refers.

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:

Standard agenda item at the JCF and part of the Boards'/Staff Commission's Equality Schemes and Interim Disability Action Plans.

(b) Quantitative

A pilot exercise is underway to collect information from children and young people with disabilities on their experience of the education system. Appendix 1 of the Boards'/Staff Commission 2007/08 Annual Report to the Equality Commission refers.

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.

YES.

If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Measures	Action	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1	Initiated a pilot exercise to collect information from children and young people with disabilities on their experience of the education system.			Pilot exercise - completion of the questionnaires at school level will be completed by June 2008; findings analysed and published thereafter.

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

NO.

DISABILITY DUTIES

Summary Progress Report

Introduction

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the Act), as amended, public authorities, when carrying out their functions must have due regard to the need to:

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

These legal duties also require public authorities to prepare a disability action plan showing how they propose to fulfil the disability duties in relation to their functions. The five Boards and Staff Commission have been exempted by the Equality Commission from this particular requirement because they will cease to exist on 31 March 2009. The Boards/Staff Commission have developed an Interim Action Plan which will allow us to implement a programme of work in the lead up to the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority and the Northern Ireland Library Authority.

This interim plan complements work already underway in relation to the implementation of our Equality Schemes and includes measures agreed with the Equality Commission when the exemptions were granted. A summary progress report outlining the steps taken to implement this programme of work is set out below.

Consultation

A consultation event organised in partnership with Disability Action/Mencap on the interim action plan was held on 12 June 2007. There was widespread support at the meeting for the approach adopted and the content of the plan. Disability Action, commenting on the interim action plan, stated: "*We commend your interim action plan for its clarity, consensus and for its inclusion of key outcomes*".

Arising from this consultation event, the Boards/Staff Commission undertook to consider conducting a survey to collect information from children and young people with disabilities on their experience of the education system. A research proposal was drafted and endorsed by the five Boards, CCMS and the Staff Commission. During the year an information pack and questionnaires were developed. The information is being piloted in schools in the Belfast, North Eastern and Southern Board areas. The questionnaires and information pack being used to conduct the pilot survey are available at www.staffcom.org.uk. (Paragraph 11(b) refers).

Interim Action Plan

The key elements of the above plan and progress to date in its implementation are detailed below.

Action Measure 1

Review measures already taken and/or proposed to promote equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

Progress

Review conducted report available at www.staffcom.org.uk.

Main conclusions:

- i) Screening pro forma to be amended to include specific questions on disability equality, pro forma amended and issued May 2007.
- ii) Collect information from young people with disabilities on their experiences of the education system. Pilot exercise commenced May 2008.
- iii) Explore how consultations with young people could be enhanced. To be undertaken.
- iv) Examine the scope for the involvement of people with disabilities in disability awareness training for front line staff. Some such training to be undertaken.
- v) Consult service users on public access provisions. To be undertaken.

Action Measures 2 and 3

Identify the current public life positions, if any, under the remit of the Boards/Staff Commission.

If such positions exist:-

- i) examine how appointments are made to such public life positions;*
- ii) explore how disabled people could be encouraged to apply for such positions.*

Progress on Public Life Positions

The Boards/Staff Commission are non-departmental public bodies and therefore have a very limited involvement in public life appointments.

The constitution of Boards and Boards of Governors in regard to public appointments is as follows:-

Boards:

The constitution of each Board is determined by article 3(4) of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 which provides that the 'Board shall be constituted in accordance with the provision set out in Part 1 of Schedule 2 ...'. Schedule 2 provides for 1) the Department of Education to determine the number of Board members, and 2) the constitution of the Board.

The Board members are constituted from a number of prescribed categories:

- i) Council nominees which make up approximately $\frac{2}{5}$ of the total members of the Board;
- ii) Transferor representative members of the Board;
- iii) Representatives of the Trustees of Maintained Schools;
- iv) Persons who represent the services for which the Board is responsible;
- v) Three teachers serving in grant aided schools in the Board's area; and
- vi) Three persons appearing to have an interest in the Public Library Service

The numbers which represent each of the above categories are again prescribed by the legislation. The Board itself has no control over the number of persons appointed to the Board or

the categories from which representatives are drawn.

Boards of Governors

Membership of the Boards of Governors is determined by the nature of the school i.e. whether it is controlled or voluntary and whether it is a primary, secondary or grammar school.

The composition of membership of the Board of Governors of controlled schools is set out in Article 10(3) of the 1986 Order. The number of members depends upon the size and type of school i.e. whether it is a controlled primary, secondary or grammar school. The Board of Governors of a controlled primary school will consist of 9, 16 or 24 voting members depending upon the size of the school. Normally where there are 9 voting members appointed to the Board of Governors, of those members:

- a. Four shall be nominated by the transferors and superseded managers of the school or schools;
- b. Two shall be elected by parents of pupils attending the school from amongst the parents of pupils attending the school;
- c. Two shall be appointed by the Area Education and Library Board responsible for the management of the school;
- d. One shall be elected by assistant teachers at the School from amongst Assistant Teachers employed at the school.

Where there are 16 or 24 voting members, members are appointed from the same categories but their numbers are varied as prescribed in Schedule 4. Historically, in relation to category C, the Boards have appointed Board members. The Boards have not as yet had sight of the draft legislation for the Education and Skills Authority and therefore are unable to indicate the arrangements proposed for the management of Board of Governors post 1 April 2009. In summary, the position is that the Boards have no power to appoint members to their own Board and their powers in respect of Boards of Governors are very limited.

The Boards/Staff Commission have concluded that it is inappropriate to develop a good practice guide for consideration by ESA as such guidance already exists under the auspices of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Advisory Panels

Joint Consultative Forum

The Boards/Staff Commission established the above Forum in partnership with NICEM. Its primary purpose is to provide a formal working link between public authorities in the education sector and the community, voluntary and trade union sectors and the statutory equality authorities on the implementation of our Equality Schemes. Membership of this Forum is open to all those individuals/groups listed on the Boards'/Staff Commission's Equality Schemes.

Action - when conducting targeted consultation events in partnership with disability groups, inform consultees about the role and function of the Forum. It is anticipated that this will encourage them and their respective members to participate more fully in its work.

Youth Service Liaison Forum

This is a liaison forum with no executive powers. Its role is to share information across the youth service and debate issues and help inform DE policy. It is chaired by DE with the secretariat

being provided by the Youth Council for Northern Ireland. Its membership comprises the DE, Youth Council, five Education and Library Boards and the voluntary youth sector.

Summary

In relation to public life positions, the Boards/Staff Commission, because of their limited role in public appointments, have taken a wide interpretation of this term and have included groups over which they have influence or a direct relationship.

Action Measure 4

Conduct an examination of training and guidance on the promotion of equality for people with disabilities.

Progress

Addressed under measure 1.

Action Measure 5

Organise a joint seminar with Section 75 Groups to:-

- i) explore how public life positions could be made more accessible to and inclusive of people with disabilities;*
- ii) examine how to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and*
- iii) identify measures which could be considered for inclusion in the disability action plan for ESA.*

Participation

The officers of the Joint Consultative Forum recommended that, in addition to the new disability duties being considered at the JCF, a separate consultation event should be held with disability groups under the auspices of Disability Action and Mencap.

Consultations on how best to implement the disability duties therefore included:

- partnership event between Boards/Staff Commission, Disability Action and Mencap, June 2007 (notes available at www.staffcom.org.uk)
- written submissions from Mencap; Carers Northern Ireland; Employers' Forum on Disability; Disability Action; Lisburn Access Group
- agenda item at Joint Consultative Forum, October 2007 (notes available at www.staffcom.org.uk)

Summary of Feedback from Consultees

Awareness-Raising

- need to raise awareness of disability issues through corporate activities and training;
- training strategy should target teaching and non-teaching (front-line) staff - materials should be designed with and delivered by people with disabilities;
- consider holding an 'involvement' day whereby people with disabilities and their carers can contribute to policy making and raise awareness on the issues affecting them.

Research

- conduct research to identify the distinct experiences and needs of people with a learning disability and the extent of their participation in the education sector;
- if surveying staff regarding disability issues, target all staff to obtain attitudes to disability as well as obtaining feedback on experiences of employment from staff with disabilities;
- collect information on the experience of children and young people of the education system;
- audit research already conducted into children with disabilities being bullied at school, assess findings, consider what further action is required including whether further research is necessary;
- examine the attitudes of teachers to pupils with disabilities; consider the extent to which diversity/inclusion is addressed as part of their initial and in-service training.

Employment

- conduct an examination of routes into employment, criteria and experience required for each post;
- consider the difficulties raised for people with disabilities and/or carers when recruitment is to a 'pool' of staff who may be allocated posts across Northern Ireland.

Equality of Access

- people with learning difficulties do not currently enjoy equal access to, or benefit from, public services - identify the barriers and how they can be overcome;
- ensure the availability of information in a meaningful and fully accessible manner;
- concerns raised about the need for easy to understand signage in buildings and that in new building design it was important to achieve the right balance between attractive buildings and easily accessible.

Consultation

- seek to effectively engage with people with disabilities of all ages and types of disability;
- need to develop an outreach strategy to reach some people with disabilities who may use separate disability specific facilities;
- need to involve carers in consultations, particularly those around the implementation of the disability duties;
- importance of a co-ordinated approach to consultation.

Conclusion

The Boards/Staff Commission, in their final report on the new Disability Duties, will:

- summarise progress made;
- identify conclusions reached; and
- provide a report on the pilot exercise aimed at collecting information from children and young people on their experience of the school system.

Appendix 3

Progress Report on the Implementation of Actions as a result of the EQIA “Electronic Libraries for Northern Ireland”

The Electronic Libraries for Northern Ireland programme has established an Intelligent Customer Unit (ICU) to manage the services on behalf of the 5 Education and Library Boards. A major function of the ICU has been to ensure a robust ‘Benefits Realisation Process’ is established and as part of that objectives have been set in line with the result of the ELFNI Equality Impact assessment. This process is monitored by the ELFNI Contract Executive.
