



Northern
Ireland
Office

Section 75 Northern Ireland Act 1998

Annual Progress Report 1 April 2006 – 31 March 2007

Equality Officer

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- *What were the key policy/service developments made by the authority during this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations?*

Criminal Justice Reform and Delivery Division (CJRDD)

CJRDD continued with the development of a Criminal Justice System Northern Ireland (CJSNI) wide workforce strategy which seeks to find ways to make the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland more representative of the wider community. The Criminal Justice Review stated that the attainment of a workforce that is, at all levels, and in its constituent agencies, broadly reflective of the community in Northern Ireland, by religious background, gender and other Section 75 categories, is an objective for the criminal justice system which they strongly endorsed and recommended the development of a strategy to achieve it. A Strategy document has been prepared which sets out the composition of the CJSNI in terms of community background, gender, ethnic background and disability and outlines current and future activities designed to attract applicants to the system. Equity in the Criminal Justice system was a workshop at the criminal justice conference in June 2007 and as a result of discussions additional information on grade composition is required for the document. This is being processed at present and the completed document will be the subject of a public consultation.

Along with partner agencies in the CJSNI, CJRDD have been developing an equity monitoring system to ensure that everyone passing through the system is treated equally regardless of their section 75 category. The pilot exercise of the equity monitoring system concluded that proposed processes would not be workable on a system-wide basis. Since the pilot had concluded, PSNI had developed plans to expand the range of data it collects – from early in 2008 it will collect 7 of the 9 Section 75 categories.

Criminal Justice Services Division (CJSD)

CJSD continued to maintain and develop closer working relations with a wide range of voluntary and community groups relating to its business areas.

Consultations were taken forward through workshops, websites, targeted correspondence and meetings with representative groups. Partners and client groups were invited to comment on relevant proposed policies, strategies and practices. Youth groups and young offenders were directly involved in the development of revised Juvenile Justice Rules, the production of a Charter for Youth Justice and in research into, and evaluation of, the Bails Support and Supervision Scheme and Remand Fostering Scheme.

Devolution and Legislation Division (DLD)

DLD were responsible for organising the political negotiations with the Northern Ireland parties to secure the restoration of devolution. The culmination was the St Andrews Agreement. The reporting period saw the

following legislation - **Northern Ireland Act 2006, Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006, Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Act 2006** and **Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Act 2007**.

As well as providing the constitutional framework to facilitate a return to devolved Government, which was the central feature of all three Acts of Parliament, the Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Act 2006 contains a number of provisions aimed at promoting equality of opportunity and good relations. These provisions place duties on the Executive Committee to adopt strategies that will enhance and protect the development of the Irish language, enhance and develop the Ulster Scots language, heritage and culture and tackling poverty, social exclusion and patterns of deprivation based on objective need.

Community Safety Unit (CSU)

The Community Safety Unit of the Northern Ireland Office provided a 2 year package of funding totalling £3.75m to establish and deliver local projects and initiatives aimed at reducing crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

These local projects are delivered through 26 Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) based in every council area in Northern Ireland. The projects being delivered are based on local community safety strategies which were produced following community consultations.

Youth Justice Agency (YJA)

The key policy/service developments within the YJA included:-

- development of a Mental Health Strategy;
- opening of the Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre in January 2007 to support positive interactions between staff and children within a safe and secure environment, in line with new legislation on the rights of children and young people;
- appointment of an Independent Complaints Reviewer to oversee the Agency's complaints procedures; and
- assessment of all young people's mental health needs upon admission to the Juvenile Justice Centre and on a continual basis.

Compensation Agency

The Compensation Agency highlighted the availability of its services by providing several presentations on the Agency and the Tariff compensation scheme to stakeholders and customers.

A member of staff who is deaf joined the Agency on secondment and was facilitated with the necessary arrangements to enable effective working. A deaf awareness exhibition was held within the Agency which provided reference sources to staff and highlighted areas of information. The Agency has subsequently learned from this and has been able to further develop processes to overcome potential obstacles e.g. working with signers and providing training to suit needs.

A review of the Agency's complaints procedure was undertaken to make it more accessible and user friendly. The Agency commissioned an in-depth customer opinion survey which included consultations with Section 75 groups.

Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS)

During 2006-2007 NIPS progressed the development of a strategy to meet the needs of the growing number of foreign national prisoners now coming into prison custody. NIPS has been consulting widely during the development of this strategy and this culminated in a seminar focusing on resettlement and reintegration needs in March 2007. The event was attended by prison staff and representatives of a number of organisations who work with ethnic minority communities. The workshops looked at the barriers faced by foreign nationals and delegates were invited to suggest ways in which these barriers could be overcome. The issues emerging from the workshop will be used to inform the development of the strategy.

Work continued during this year on the development of a NIPS Staff Diversity Strategy which will be published for consultation in December 2007. Measures to promote equality and to target under represented groups included:-

- positive advertising, which sought to encourage members of under-represented groups to apply for recruitment competitions;
- extending advertising to regional newspapers and making use of other media;
- ensuring that all interview panels are made up from a cross section of backgrounds; and

- targeting Catholic schools for recruitment campaigns.

Progress was made during the reporting year on the development of pilot programmes for Good Relations and Diversity Dialogues with Future Ways and Community Dialogue.

- ***What are the main initiatives planned in the coming year to ensure the authority improves outcomes in terms of equality of opportunity and good relations for individuals from the nine categories covered by Section 75?***

Following the 5 year review of the NIO Equality Scheme, the recommendations for improvements to the Scheme will be considered when it is revised later this year.

The NIO will continue to implement various action plans, including the Disability Action Plan which was published in June 2007.

The NIO will carry out mandatory training for all staff on Diversity and Equality beginning in October 2007.

CJRDD will consult on a draft workforce strategy in September 2007.

From early 2008 the PSNI will commence the collection of information in seven of the nine section 75 categories for equity monitoring purposes. Of the other two categories, information in relation to sexual orientation will only be collected in instances of hate crime. PSNI has decided not to

collect information in relation to the final one, political opinion, for the moment, this decision will be kept under review.

The NIO has commissioned a Strategic Review of parading which should provide recommendations on how parading can be taken forward in Northern Ireland in a way which is consistent with the Shared Future Objectives of respect, tolerance, responsible citizenship and promoting equality of opportunity and human rights. The Review is due to report in 2008.

The Youth Justice Agency plans to:-

- design a specification for a system which will facilitate the ongoing analysis of how the differing background circumstances of young people who offend impact on reconviction levels so that the Agency may target resources more effectively;
- provide a range of community-based services and programmes in designated Renewing Communities areas. Renewing Communities is an inter-Departmentally funded initiative to address social needs in loyalist areas. The Youth Justice Agency is funded to deliver three actions under the initiative.
- further develop and test a measurement system in order to establish baseline figures in relation to key outcomes, in line with the OFMDFM Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland; and
- implement the agreed recommendations of the Mental Health Working Group Report.

In the Compensation Agency the following initiatives have been planned in the coming year:-

- a new target has been established to deal with customer complaints as part of the Agency's 2007-08 business plan;
- sign language training for Agency staff will be organised by autumn 2007; and
- the development of the Agency's website to provide a more accessible service to customers, including those with disabilities.

Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS)

NIPS is currently undertaking a review of its performance in this area as part of the development of a new service-wide Equality & Diversity Strategy. This will, in due course, encompass the NIPS Staff Diversity Strategy mentioned previously (page 7). NIPS intends to develop its own Equality Scheme (subject to the approval of the Equality Commission) and is in the process of conducting a Policy Audit. NIPS is conducting further screening of existing NIPS policies in order to identify a programme of Equality Impact Assessments in key areas of its organisation.

As part of this development NIPS intends to recruit a dedicated Equality Manager to be responsible for driving the new Equality and Diversity Strategy.

NIPS is also developing new corporate guidance on policy making which will include the procedures to be followed for equality and human rights in

respect of screening of new policies. It is also revising its consultation processes to ensure that consultation is undertaken much earlier in the policy-making process. In future the full equality screening form will be published on the Prison Service website.

NIPS produced a Disability Equality Duty Action Plan which was submitted to the Equality Commission as part of the NIO Plan; however they plan to consult more fully with prisoners and visitors in the coming months. The Plan will be revised to incorporate the outcome of that consultation exercise.

SECTION 1: STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SECTION 75 DUTIES

- ***Outline evidence of progress made in developing and meeting equality and good relations objectives, performance indicators and targets in corporate and annual operating plans during 2006-07.***

Equality and diversity considerations are included in Departmental planning documents. Where relevant, Directorate plans contain objectives to ensure that all staff mainstream equality into day to day policy formulation and development work and identify areas where divisions are taking action to meet section 75 obligations such as screening and equality impact assessments.

The need to provide appropriate advice and guidance on equality/section 75 as it impacts upon the work of the division is an Equality Driver objective. Staff and line managers involved in making policy are trained

to be aware, and take account of, equality considerations in their work. All staff are advised to ensure equality is reflected in their objectives and appraisal process where relevant. The Equality Drivers have been used throughout the year to disseminate equality information, provide advice at a divisional level, address equality issues and to enhance the general mainstreaming of equality within the Department.

The NIO Diversity and Equality website on the NIO Intranet in the 'About the NIO' section of the intranet continues to be maintained and updated regularly. This site includes NIO equality publications and information on equality issues, action plans and links to further general equality websites.

The Department has two senior officers as Diversity champions – one based in London and one in Belfast. They chair a very active group of volunteers who constitute the Diversity Steering Group which seeks to encourage greater diversity across the organisation. The Department also encourages a number of staff networks of minority groupings.

To ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 an independent survey of all Youth Justice Agency premises has been undertaken and plans will be put in place to modify facilities where reasonable.

In line with adopting a more targeted approach to consultation Central Management Unit was involved in the organisation of two successful face to face consultation events on the NIO Disability Action Plan.

SECTION 2: SCREENING

- *Provide an update of new/proposed/revised policies screened during the year.*

Title of policy subject to screening	Was the Full Screening Report or the Result of initial screening issued for consultation? Please enter F or R	Was initial screening decision changed following consultation ? Yes/No	Is policy being subject to EQIA? Yes/No? If yes indicate year for assessment.
Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 (DLD)	Screened Out. No public consultation.		N
A forum on a Bill of Rights for NI (HREU)	Policy set in April 2003 in Joint Declaration; this was not screened because of time constraints in the political process. Suggestions on membership of Forum sought in general consultation exercise in November 2006. Membership of Forum screened December 2006 – screened out.	N	N

Framework of criminal law and procedures on sentencing (CJRDD)	In final stages of development.		
Review of the current framework of the criminal law on sex offences (CJRDD)	Summary of consultation responses issued June 2007.	To be revisited.	
Delivering a better service to victims and witnesses of Crime – A NI Draft Strategy (CJRDD)	Consultation on 5 tier draft strategy concluded 23 April 2007. Summary of responses published July 2007. Strategy to launch in September 2007.	Screened out in terms of strategic objectives. Individual policies will be screened when policy positions are more fully developed.	
Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2007 (CJRDD)	Consultation to be launched post summer.		
Road Traffic and Driver Disqualification (CJRDD)	R	N	N

Making Sure Crime Doesn't Pay – Proposals for a new measure to prevent convicted criminals profiting published accounts of their crime (CJRDD)	R Joint consultation with Home Office and Scottish executive.	N	N
Consultation on Quashing Convictions (CJRDD)	R	N	N
The Law on Knives in NI (CJRDD)	R	N	N
Transitional Community Safety Strategy 2007/08 – 2009/10 (CSU)	Under development.		
Proposal for a draft Policing (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 2007 (Policing Division)	R	N	N
Young People and Licensed Firearms – A review of the relevant provisions of the Firearms (NI) Order 2004 (Policing Division)	R	N	N

Amendments to the Draft Police and Criminal Evidence (Amendment) (NI) Order (Policing Division)	F	N	N
Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 (Renewal of Temporary Provisions) Order 2007 (Policing Division)	No consultation on screening report. Consultation on policy.		
Policing Division circular on forfeiture issues in police pensions (Policing Division)	No consultation on screening report. Consultation on policy.	N	N
Policing Division circular on the role of the SMP/IMR re IOD in respect of ex-police officers over age 65 (Policing Division)	No consultation on screening report. Consultation on policy.	N	N
Policing Division circular on the new CRA Guidance to bring into line with new equality legislation (Policing Division)	Full screening report – no consultation. Consultation on policy.	N	N

Police Support Staff (Suitability) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (Policing Division)	Screened out with no consultation on the screening exercise; consultation on the policy.		
Child Protection Policy and Procedures (YJA)	Screened out with no consultation on the screening exercise; consultation on the policy.	N	N
Complaints Charter (YJA)	Screened out with no consultation on the screening exercise; consultation on the policy.	N	N
Regulating the Private Security Industry in Northern Ireland (SPOB)	F	N	N
Replacement arrangements for the Diplock Court System (SPOB)	F	N	N
Progressive Regime and Earned Privileges Scheme (PREPS) Policy Review and Consultation (NIPS)	R	N	N

NIPS policy and guidance for the operational deployment of PAVA Incapacitant spray for use in serious incident (NIPS)	F	N	N
NIPS Management of Mothers and Babies (NIPS)	R	Responses under consideration	Y
NIPS Policy on Alcohol and Substance Abuse (NIPS)	R	Responses under consideration	
Development of policy in respect of probation in NI (CJSD)	No – internal process	N	N
Policy on treatment of juveniles in custody (CJSD)	R	Responses under consideration	N
Policy on supervision of juveniles under Juvenile Justice Centre Orders (CJSD)	R	Responses under consideration	N
Transfer of Lead Responsibility for National Security Intelligence work (PRSD)	No – internal process		N

SECTION 3: EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EQIA)

- *Provide an update of policies subject to EQIA during 2006/07, stage 7 EQIA monitoring activities and an indicative EQIA timetable for 2007-08.*

EQIA Timetable – April 2006 - March 2007

Title of Policy EQIA	EQIA Stage at end March 07 (Steps 1-6)	Outline adjustments to policy intended to benefit individuals, and the relevant equality & good relations categories due to be affected.
Police Voluntary Severance Scheme (Policing Division)	Completed	

Ongoing EQIA Monitoring Activities April 2006- March 2007

Title of EQIA subject to Stage 7 monitoring	Indicate if differential impacts previously identified have reduced or increased	Indicate if adverse impacts previously identified have reduced or increased
The co-ordination of policies on vulnerable and/or intimidated witnesses (CJRDD)	Significant data gaps – CJRDD have worked with Court Service to establish a central recording mechanism on the handling of special measures applications at Court. Researchers to undertake an evaluation in 2008/09	

	when the volume of data recorded would support a finding of statistical significance.	
A protocol for community-based restorative justice schemes (CJRDD)	Ministers concluded that there were no opportunities to mitigate options which would not, in themselves, impact adversely on public confidence in the overall process. Protocol published 5 February 2007 and preparations for implementation underway. Data on referrals to schemes will include information on section 75 categories to assist future monitoring.	
Policy on the Arrangement for the Delivery of Support Services to Victims of Crime (CSU)	No variance.	No variance.
New site for FSNI laboratory (CJSD)	Pending finalisation of the future arrangements for FSNI	
Postings, placements and transfers	Information from consultation to be considered.	
Pay and part-time staff	Information from consultation to be considered.	

2007-08 EQIA Time-table

Title of EQIAs due to be commenced during April 2007 – March 2008	Existing or New policy?	Please indicate expected timescale of Decision Making stage i.e. Stage 6
Older Persons Community Safety Strategy (CSU)	New	October 2007
New Community Safety Strategy (CSU)	New	Not known
Strategy for the Management of Women in Custody (NI Prison Service)	New	To be confirmed
Strategy for the development of the adult male prison estate (NI Prison Service)	New	To be confirmed
Reduce Offending Strategy (CJSD)	New	September 2007

- ***Where the EQIA timetable for 2006/07 (as detailed in the previous annual S75 progress report to the Commission) has not been met, please provide details of the factors responsible for delay and details of the timetable for re-scheduling the EQIA/s in question.***

N/A

SECTION 4: TRAINING

- ***Outline training provision during the year associated with the Section 75 Duties/Equality Scheme requirements including types of training provision, numbers attending, and conclusions from any training evaluations.***

New staff receive Equality and Awareness Training within four weeks of joining the Department. In addition, those joining the NIO also receive a desktop Aide Memoir on section 75 duties on Equality and Good Relations.

During 2006/07, Central Management Unit took over responsibility for the organisation of additional training sessions in the following areas:-

- Section 75 awareness;
- Equality screening; and
- Equality Impact Assessments.

On four occasions Equality Impact Assessment training was provided by Queens University. NIO Equality Drivers, NI Prison Service staff and Police Division staff attended this training, a total of 35 staff in all.

There are also a number of consultation training courses available through the Consultation Institute. CMU regularly circulate details of up and coming training sessions to staff and if anyone is interested in attending a particular training session they apply direct to the Institute.

Youth Justice Agency

During 2006/07 a number of “wash up” training sessions were delivered to achieve the Agency’s corporate training priority for 2005/06 to deliver Diversity, Equal Opportunities and Human Rights awareness training to all operational staff. Diversity and Equal Opportunities training is also a module incorporated into the induction process for staff joining the Agency.

Compensation Agency

In the Compensation Agency during 2006/07 a member of staff attended an EQIA training session, two members of staff attended a Disability Action Seminar and two members of staff attended the Equality Communications Seminar.

Northern Ireland Prison Service

NIPS has delivered specific modules on equality, diversity and human rights training during the Principal Officer and Senior Officer development week. From April 2006-March 2007, 131 staff completed this training programme. The same modules were delivered to 105 new entrants for the same period. Refresher training in the screening process was provided to nominated staff through their learning and training co-ordinators.

Staff selected to work in a new pilot ‘Reach’ unit in Maghaberry undertook specific training during the year to equip them to meet the needs of prisoners referred to the Unit. Sixteen staff undertook Applied Suicide

Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), and training programmes on personality disorder, general mental health awareness, motivational interviewing, as well as, drug awareness and substance misuse. REACH is a service which identifies prisoners with complex needs and provides assessment and support within a structured and therapeutic environment. The overall aim of the Reach Unit is to reintegrate prisoners into the wider prison community. The Unit opened in April 2007.

SECTION 5: COMMUNICATION

- ***Outline how the authority communicated progress on delivery of the statutory duties during the year and evidence of the impact/success of such activities.***

The Equality Drivers Group, consists of representatives from across the Department and is chaired by the Director of Resources. Equality Drivers play a key role in ensuring the equality message is delivered to all staff.

Equality screening is now carried out at an early stage in policy making and section 75 duties are in the minds of policy makers throughout the development of the policy. There is evidence from Divisions that mainstreaming of equality and good relations considerations has now become embedded in the policy making process.

The Equality Unit is currently waiting guidance from the Equality Commission before revising the NIO Equality Scheme and guidance to staff.

In order to ensure all relevant parties are included in consultations on policy, and to avoid overburdening them with documents they are not interested in, the NIO carries out periodical exercises to advise organisations of the forthcoming documents to be issued for consultation and requesting confirmation if they wish to be consulted. The last exercise was carried out by the Equality Unit in December 2006 and we are planning to repeat this exercise in late summer 2007.

All consultation documents include a note of the NIO's obligations under section 75.

The NIO website is kept up to date with information on section 75 duties. It contains copies of the Equality Scheme, the Annual Progress Reports, press releases relating to equality, all documents out for public consultation and results of equality screening exercises.

Compensation Agency

The Compensation Agency has an excellent internal communication flow which has been highlighted in a recent Departmental review and in their re-accreditation in relation to the Charter Mark standard.

SECTION 6: DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

- ***Outline any systems that were established during the year to supplement available statistical and qualitative research.***
- ***Outline any research undertaken/commissioned to obtain information on the needs and experiences of individuals from the nine categories covered by Section 75.***

A representative from Statistics and Research Branch attends meetings of ENSRIG, the cross departmental Information and Research Needs Strategy group, which sets the direction is assessing and filling gaps on information relating to section 75 issues. In addition NIO with NISRA has been involved with the Office of National Statistics on a review and audit of equality data in Great Britain.

Two major pieces of research work were undertaken in terms of equity monitoring during the year:-

- a project to pilot the feasibility of self-report of Section 75 within PSNI Custody Suites; and
- a more technical project looking at the potential for delivery of Section 75 data through a specifically derived module of the developing integrated criminal justice database system (Causeway).

The major development during the year in terms of data collection was an initiative by PSNI to begin collection of most Section 75 categories on the new NICHE data system with effect from the beginning of April 2007. This initiative is critical to future developments of Section 75 data collection within the Criminal Justice System, bringing with it the possibility of feed-through of such information from the earliest stages of process.

Criminal Justice Review and Delivery Division

Criminal Justice Review and Delivery Division worked with the NI Court Service to put in place a central recording mechanism which covers all courts where special measures are provided. The system became fully operational in December 2006 and independent research is planned for 2008/09 when the volume of recorded data will have achieved levels which would provide statistically significant results.

Policing Division

PSNI have undertaken an EQIA on the selection and recruitment of regular PSNI trainees. The findings from this EQIA will be used to supplement previously available information.

Youth Justice Agency

In the Youth Justice Agency an audit of the proportion of staff by community background, gender, race and disability was completed to identify areas of under representation. The results are regularly updated.

Preliminary work has also begun on designing a specification for the system referred to on Page 9. This system will also enable the Agency to establish baseline figures in relation to key outcomes, in line with the OFMDFM Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland.

Compensation Agency

The Agency commissioned an extensive customer Opinion Survey on its service. All sections of the community were approached and there were five focus groups with representatives of Section 75 categories including those with disabilities, ethnic minorities and gay/lesbian/bisexual communities. All issues raised were carefully considered. The Agency is working to promote greater awareness of its services, one aspect of which will be through liaising with Victim Support NI.

Northern Ireland Prison Service

At present NIPS is in the process of rolling out a new Prison Record Information System (PRISM).

NIPS currently holds data on religion, racial group, age, marital status and gender, but it does not record disability (except by implication in relation to medical workers) and it does not record sexual orientation or political opinion. Further work is being taken forward to explore the recording, monitoring and management of Section 75 information within the Prison Service.

SECTION 7: INFORMATION PROVISION, ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SERVICES

- ***Detail any initiatives/steps taken during the year to improve access to services including provision of information in accessible formats.***

Information continues to be available on request in large print, Braille and Irish and Ulster Scots. A textphone service is provided for those contacting the Department and action has been taken to more widely advertise the availability of this service during the year. The Department has access to translation and interpretation services (including into British Sign Language and Irish Sign Language) for persons wishing to contact the Department in a language other than English. Information can also now be made available in digital daisy format on request.

In November 2006 the launch on the CJSNI website of an interactive web facility, with browsealoud feature for those with sight impairments, has provided victims of crime with easy access to information about the operation of the entire criminal justice system and what they might expect from their engagement with all of the relevant statutory agencies and their voluntary sector partners.

The Youth Justice Agency held a series of events at various locations to publicise the “roll out” of the Youth Conference Service to cover all areas of Northern Ireland and re-launch the community service projects. Community Services is a directorate of the Youth Justice Agency that

manages a number of community based services across Northern Ireland.

The aim of these events was to promote the work of the Agency in local areas. Such promotional work will continue.

The Youth Justice Agency also organised a series of open visits for a broad range of stakeholders (including local residents, public representatives and the media) held at the new Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre prior to opening.

The Compensation Agency endeavours to make its services as accessible as possible and has the following measures in place:-

- the Agency scheme guides and Charter Statement are available in large print, Braille and on audio cassette; the guide is also available in the two most requested foreign languages, Chinese and Indian;
- the Agency can provide a signer for deaf people;
- a loop system for hearing impaired is available in the reception area;
- the Agency can also provide interpreters through prior arrangement with the Customer Information Officer;
- its premises are wheelchair accessible;
- direct dial numbers are identified on all correspondence; and
- visitor rooms are provided.

The Northern Ireland Prison Service has a textphone service on its general enquiry telephone for those who have difficulty hearing. The

NIPS website is also Website Double A compliant – this means that they adhere to guidelines laid down by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) which is the body responsible for setting Internet and Web standards. This is useful to the visually impaired, dyslexic and those with literacy problems. Documents are also made available in other formats on request. Work has progressed to secure interpreting and translation services to meet the needs of foreign national prisoners.

SECTION 8: COMPLAINTS

- ***Identify the number of Section 75 related complaints:***
 - ***received by the authority;***
 - ***resolved by the authority (including how this achieved);***
 - ***which were not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant;***
 - ***which were referred to the Equality Commission.***

There were no section 75 related complaints during 2006/07.

A complaint regarding anti social behaviour legislation (ASBOs) originated in 2004/05 and was concluded in 2005/06. A review of the implementation of ASBOs was initiated by the Northern Ireland Office in November 2006. However, this has now been absorbed by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate in their planned independent review. The Northern Ireland Office will no longer lead the review but will contribute fully to the Criminal Justice Inspectorate work which is expected to be completed in early 2008 and published by March 2008.

SECTION 9: CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

- *Provide details of the measures taken to enhance the level of engagement with individuals and representative groups during the year.*

The Equality Unit in co-ordination with the Northern Ireland Criminal Justice Divisions and Agencies and other NI Departments organised two separate consultation events for the Disability Action Plan. A number of consultation groups and representative organisations were invited to the event to put forward their views or suggestions to be included in the Disability Action Plan. The Plan was then published on the NIO website and advertisements were placed in the local newspapers. Copies of the plan were also made available in large print, Braille and digital daisy.

As mentioned previously, in December 2006 the Equality Unit issued a list of forthcoming documents and policies which would be issued for consultation within the Department. The list was issued to an extensive list of consultee groups who indicated which consultations they were interested in.

Rights and International Relations Division

Consultation and engagement on the setting up of a Bill of Rights Forum included discussions with a wide range of bodies, leading to a Forum membership which reflected the interests of a number of the section 75 groups.

Criminal Justice Reform and Delivery Division

Within the Division named individuals are given responsibility for planning and managing of consultation exercises within their area of policy responsibility. Consultation timetables are prepared and agreed by more senior officials, who also review progress of consultations against the planned timetable. Hard copies of consultations are issued to a broad range of stakeholder groups which may have an interest. Notifications of consultations are placed in local newspapers. Consultation documents are published on the NIO website and copies have been made available in Braille, audiotape, large print and in ethnic minority languages. Those organisations or individuals wishing to respond to consultation exercises can do so by post, fax, email or textphone.

Consultation practices and outcomes have been reviewed leading to more effective consultation planning and management. Subsequent consultation exercises carried out resulted in responses from a broader spectrum of stakeholders including section 75 representative organisations.

In search of enhancing engagement with stakeholders and interested parties in the development of initiatives to improve services for victims and witnesses of crime the Criminal Justice Directorate held a policy development workshop in a local hotel. This afforded the opportunity for statutory agencies, public bodies, voluntary sector groups and victims and their representatives to discuss and contribute to the development of proposals for the draft 5 year strategy aimed at improving services to victims and witnesses of crime. This event was well attended and helped

identify significant ways to plug the gap between victims' needs and current service delivery. These were reflected in the draft strategy which issued for public consultation on 29 January 2007 and consultees views will be taken into account in finalising the strategy "Bridging the Gap" which will be launched in September 2007.

Policing Division

A draft of the Police Support Staff (Suitability) Regulations 2007 was sent for consultation in connection with the draft Policing (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 2007. In addition, the Northern Ireland Policing Board held a series of public workshops in November 2006 on the introduction of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) to Northern Ireland. The vetting of PCSOs, as members of Police Support Staff, was covered at these workshops and members of the public had the opportunity to express their opinion. There was consultation on the statutory minimum age limit at which young people may have access to firearms.

Security Policy and Operations Division

In light of comments from organisations about the volume of consultation papers received from Government SPOB adopted a more focused approach to consultation. Instead of sending copies of consultation papers to each organisation they wrote to consultees with a brief summary of the consultation and how to obtain a full copy of the consultation paper.

Criminal Justice Service Division

Criminal Justice Services Division has continued to work closely with the voluntary sector which includes organisations such as Extern, NIACRO, Include Youth and the YMCA, with the aim of having appropriate services delivered to young people involved in, or at risk of involvement in, crime.

During the year the Criminal Justice Board worked with the Northern Ireland Youth forum to produce a Charter for Youth Justice in Northern Ireland. The views of young people were actively sought in order to gain an awareness of what a youth justice system should look like from their perspective. The Charter was subsequently launched at a Stakeholders' Conference held on 4 June 2006.

In addition, Include Youth was tasked with consulting and involving children and young people in the production of DVDs for training purposes in which children and their families address issues around crime and how contact with the justice and care system has affected their lives.

Community Safety Unit

The Community Safety Unit provide a two year package of funding totaling £3.75m to establish and deliver local projects and initiatives aimed at reducing crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. Local projects were delivered through 26 Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) based in every council area in Northern Ireland. Youth engagement activities being delivered through these local plans included midnight soccer schemes, skating/DJ events, inter-generational activities,

Shadow Youth council promotion, drug and alcohol awareness programmes and the provision of youth shelters.

Youth Justice Agency

The Agency works with groups such as Include Youth (Young Voices Project) to allow the voices of young people to be heard and empower them to shape the services they receive. This group has recently been tasked with the production of a “child friendly” Independent Complaints Reviewer Referral Form. Young people in the Juvenile Justice Centre were involved in the production of “child friendly” Complaints Charter and Child Protection leaflets.

Community Services Directorate within the Youth Justice Agency is constantly seeking to build links with local community based groups to complement the relationships it already has with education and family support services. In 2006-07 more than fifty new partnership arrangements were developed with a spectrum of groups including sports clubs, charity fund raising groups, animal sanctuaries, volunteer bureaux and community fora. These provided opportunities for the community to offer young people access to appropriately diversionary activities, to demonstrate active citizenship and to participate in reparation.

Enquiries have also been made on the possibility of utilising the Young Peoples Steering Group established by the Northern Ireland Policing Board as a mechanism to obtain feedback and their views on:-

- offending generally;
- how young people who have offended should be dealt with;

- the role of parents/guardians in the process;
- whether parents need further support or help to fulfil this role;
- their appreciation and understanding of the Criminal Justice system and how it works – including the role/services provided by YJA in this process;
- awareness of Restorative Justice (Statutory and Community) – in particular the victims involvement/role in the process – and their opinions on this particular approach;
- the referral of young people to a “community” type service rather than a stronger (e.g. custodial) approach; and
- young peoples general awareness and understanding of their human rights.

Compensation Agency

As mentioned in Section 6 the Agency conducted an extensive review of individuals and Section 75 group representatives to establish what the Agency was doing well and what changes could be made to improve the processes for its customers. In addition Agency representatives have given presentations and held discussions with interested groups e.g. Victim Support NI and the Inter Agency Group (which includes NEXUS, Well Women Centres and various trusts).

Northern Ireland Prison Service

NIPS has consulted on a range of policies (including the results of equality screening during the year). On two particular policy areas – child protection and the management of foreign national prisoners – NIPS engaged stakeholders at an earlier stage in the policy making process

and conducted meetings with individuals/organisations to inform policy development. On the development of the Strategy for the Management of Foreign Nationals in prison a series of meetings were held with individuals and organisations and a workshop was held in early March to share what NIPS had been working on. Delegates included prison staff, representatives of partner agencies and representatives of ethnic minority groups.

SECTION 10: THE GOOD RELATIONS DUTY

- ***Provide details of additional steps taken to implement or progress the good relations duty during the year. Please indicate any findings or expected outcomes from this work.***

The promotion of good relations remains fundamental to all the work of the Department and is achieved mainly by effective partnership working.

Within the criminal justice system generally there are peculiar difficulties associated with obtaining monitoring statistics under section 75 – both practical difficulties and potential human rights objections. Such monitoring works best when people can clearly see and support the rationale for providing information. Attempting to obtain such information at the point of “service delivery” may actually aggravate a situation (e.g. stop and search).

The NIO continues to address such gaps in information through its research and statistics programme and through the implementation of the recommendations of the Criminal Justice Review. The current lack of

comprehensive information does not help the implementation of the section 75 duties.

On 2 February 2007 a Strategic Review of Parading was launched by Ministers. The Terms of the Review are to:-

- investigate, examine and report on the significance and relevance of parading as an expression of faith and culture in Northern Ireland;
- investigate, examine and report on the meaning, significance and relevance of parading to broader society in Northern Ireland;
- examine why certain parades are considered contentious, what their impact is on wider community relations and if they encourage sectarianism;
- consider the impact of parading on NI society in the 21st century in terms of social and economic impact and the international perspective of the country;
- drawing on research already conducted, consider how parades, protests and events which take place on the public highway are regulated in other jurisdictions where there are diverse ethnic and cultural populations and traditions;
- consider the merits of local dialogue mediation facilitation and arbitration;
- make recommendations on how parading can be taken forward in Northern Ireland in a way which is consistent with the Shared Future Objectives of respect, tolerance, responsible citizenship and promoting equality of opportunity and human rights; and

- consider what the implications of the review findings are for public policy, including legislation.

The Review will report in 2008.

Compensation Agency

The Agency constantly reviews its service to customers and initiated the following steps:-

- invited staff to nominate to learn sign language;
- exhibited a disability awareness display for staff and visitors in the reception area; and
- published a Customer Satisfaction Target in its Business Plan.

Northern Ireland Prison Service

“Prison Me No Way” volunteers visit any school/youth club which requests a display, regardless of its religious affiliation.

NIPS has engaged the University of Ulster based Future Ways Programme and Community Dialogue to deliver pilot programmes on good relations and diversity to both staff and prisoners.

A pilot programme is progressing well with staff at Magilligan and this is to be rolled out to Maghaberry and Hydebank Wood. Community Dialogues has been working with prisoners at Magilligan to deliver a session on diversity issues.

SECTION 11: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- ***Please provide any additional information/comments***

In addition to the facilitation of home and mobile working the introduction of all new technology has now a review of usability and accessibility in line with equality standards for ICT.

The British and Irish sign language exhibition was displayed in various NIO buildings throughout the Department.

The Youth Conference Service of the Youth Justice Agency received recognition for high quality service in preparing and facilitating youth conferences for young offenders and was awarded a Business Eye Award for Promotion of Diversity and Social Inclusion.

All services delivered by the Youth Justice Agency are subject to inspection and review by the Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice. These services may also be subject to review by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and young people and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.