



Summary Equality Scheme

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

**The Full Scheme was approved by the Equality Commission for Northern
Ireland on the 27 February 2013 and updated in August 2015**

Our Equality Scheme commitments explained

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a summary of our Equality Scheme which was approved by the Equality Commission and to outline how the Arts Council of Northern Ireland intends to fulfil these requirements.

A full copy of the Equality Scheme is available to download from our website at: www.artscouncil-ni.org/subpages/compliance

The Scheme can be made available in a range of accessible formats upon request.

For specific queries in relation to this Equality Scheme please contact:

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Background

ACNI is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL). It is governed by a board, known as the Council, which sets the strategic direction for the Arts Council and oversees the work of the Executive.

It is the lead development agency for the arts in Northern Ireland and the main support for artists and arts organisations, offering a broad range of funding opportunities through our Exchequer and National Lottery funds.

ACNI was established in 1962 as a successor to the Committee for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) which had operated since 1942. It became a statutory body on 1st September 1995. Its functions are set out in Article 4 (1) of the Arts Council (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 and include developing appreciation of and access to the arts, encouraging the provision of arts facilities, advising government departments on matters relating to the arts and advocating the causes of arts to government and other significant stakeholders.

ACNI's mission is to place the arts at the heart of our social, economic and creative life.

ACNI currently employs 66 staff. ACNI strives to comply with good practice in procurement policy, closely liaising with the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) within the Department for Finance and Personnel (DfP).

ACNI Equality Scheme

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

Section 75 (1)

In carrying out our functions relating to Northern Ireland we are required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

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

Section 75 (2)

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

Responsibilities and Reporting

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

An internal Equality Monitoring Working Group drawn from representatives of each business area will provide strategic leadership for the outworkings of the Equality Scheme and its associated Action Plan. Quarterly meetings of the Equality Monitoring Working Group will take place to oversee and ensure implementation of the Action Plan and adherence to the Equality Scheme.

ACNI prepares an annual report on the progress we have made on implementing the arrangements set out in this equality scheme to discharge our Section 75 statutory duties (Section 75 annual progress report). The Section 75 annual progress report is sent to the Equality Commission by the 31 August each year and will follow guidance on annual reporting issued by the Equality Commission. Progress on the delivery of Section 75 statutory duties will also be included in our (organisational) annual report.

Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan

In the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's development of its new Equality Scheme, an Audit of Inequalities was conducted. The purpose of this Audit was for the Arts Council to analyse information collected regarding each Section 75 category. This allowed ACNI to identify any inequalities or gaps in Section 75 data collection. This helped to inform the development of the associated Action Plan to redress these issues.

Consultations

The Arts Council will carry out consultations in accordance with the principles outlined by the Equality Commission NI. All consultations will seek the views of those directly affected by the matter/policy, the Equality Commission, Section 75 groups, other public authorities, voluntary and community groups, our staff, trade unions and others.

Consultation periods will last for a minimum of twelve weeks. Specific training will be provided to those facilitating consultations to ensure that they have the necessary skills to communicate effectively with consultees.

Screening and Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA)

Prior to implementation of policies the Arts Council will carry out screening, and if deemed necessary, Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA). The Arts Council will publish screening and EQIA documentation on our website as well as quarterly reports.

Monitoring of Policies

Within one year of approval of equality scheme the Arts Council will review existing information systems to identify and address any gaps that may exist. The Arts Council will also monitor any adverse impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations of policies we have adopted.

Staff Training and Raising Awareness

Within three months of approval of equality scheme the Arts Council will draw up a detailed training plan for its staff. The Arts Council will put in place a number of arrangements to ensure that all staff and Board members are aware of and understand our equality obligations.

Access to Information

The Arts Council will ensure equality of opportunity in accessing information; we will provide information in alternative formats upon request, where reasonably practicable. Where the exact request cannot be met we will ensure a reasonable alternative is provided. We will respond to requests for information in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually 20 working days.

Timetable

Appendix 4 outlines our timetable for all measures proposed within the equality scheme. The measures outlined will also be incorporated into business planning processes.

Complaints

A person wishing to make a complaint that ACNI has failed to comply with its approved equality scheme should contact:

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