



Equality Scheme Action Plan

2019 – 2024

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Introduction

Under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) is required, in carrying out its functions, to have due regard to promote equality of opportunity between:

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

Public authorities are further required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

ACNI is required to set out an equality scheme and associated equality action plan to outline how it intends to fulfil these requirements. This plan outlines the actions ACNI will take over the next 5 years to build upon previous actions and to demonstrate due regard under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and facilitate access to the arts for disabled people and artists.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) is the main development agency for the arts and cultural sector and is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) of the Department for Communities (DfC).

The Arts Council (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 established the functions of the Arts Council as follows:

- a) to develop and improve the knowledge, appreciation and practice of the Arts;
- b) to increase public access to and participation in the Arts;
- c) to advise the Department and other government departments, district councils and other bodies on matters relating to the Arts; and
- d) such other functions as are conferred on the Council by any other statutory provision.

The Arts Council has developed a five year strategic framework to guide its work over the same period as the DAP, 2019 to 2024. Inspire, Connect Lead, provides an overview of the direction we are proposing to take over the next five years, setting out in detail the actions to be taken in order to deliver its strategic objectives. A number of DAP actions are reflected in this document demonstrating our commitment to mainstreaming delivery of our disability duties.

A copy of five year plan can be found at www.artscouncil-ni.org.

Arts and Equality

The Arts are unique in their ability to create safe, shared spaces where people can come together irrespective of their differences. The Arts allow people to express their identity and understand the identity of others; connecting communities and telling people's stories.

The Arts Council considers equality in all aspects of its work, including service design and delivery, employment and procurement. The Arts Council welcomes and recognises the diversity within our society, and how it is expressed and celebrated through arts and culture. It is important that we encourage an arts sector that is supportive and inclusive.

Our Evidence Base

Evidence shows us that disabled people and those aged over 65 are much less likely to participate in the arts than the overall population (General Population Survey, 2004-2016).

As a result, our strategic programmes have been designed to improve access to the arts for these groups. We will continue to promote and support engagement in the arts for all Section 75 groups through our grant making for individual artists and our project and core funding for arts organisations.

What ACNI has done to date

This action plan builds on actions that have already been put in place to encourage equality of opportunity within the arts and to facilitate good relations:

- Development of strategic programmes to address inequality in the arts, notably:
 - Arts and Older People's Programme;
 - ARTiculate (Young People and Wellbeing) programme
 - Creative Schools Partnership programme.
- Contributed towards a population level increase in arts engagement of people aged over 65, especially men aged over 65.
- Review of the premium Payment grant to enable accessibility to the arts;
- The design and delivery of an intercultural arts strategy 2015-2018;
- Review of monitoring information to improve our understanding of diversity within the arts sector;
- Establishment of an internal Equality Monitoring Working group.

How this plan will be published

A final draft of this Disability Action Plan will be published on ACNI's website, taking feedback into consideration, within 3 calendar months following a public consultation period 12 weeks. Consultees identified within our Equality Scheme will be notified by email following the plan's publication.

Equality Action Plan

Action Measure	Key performances indicator	Timescale	Outcome
1. Continue to support strategic programmes to tackle inequality: Arts and Older People; Creative Schools Partnership; Articulate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct an independent evaluation of each of these three strategic programmes. ▪ Publish independent reviews on the ACNI website. 	Annually	Section 75 groups who experience the greatest inequality in engagement with the arts are given opportunities to access the arts.
a. Deliver Arts and Older People's Programme: Engage people over 65 years old who otherwise wouldn't engage with the arts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of participants ▪ Number of participants in the programme who have not engaged with the arts in the last 12 months. 	2020-2023	Encouraging engagement for older people who would not normally be able to access the arts.
b. Deliver ARTiculate programme and Young Persons Mental Health and Wellbeing successor programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of participants (15-18) engaging in the programme ▪ Number of young participants with a disability taking part. 	2020-2023	Encouraging awareness of mental illness in young people and facilitating access for young people with mental illness to the arts.
c. Creative Schools Partnership: contribute towards increased community cohesion within Urban Village areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthen participants connections with their communities; ▪ Foster positive community identities. 	2019-2021	Encourage opportunities for good relations through the arts where there has been a history of deprivation and community tension.
2. Improve the quality of equality monitoring data identified through the Annual Funding Survey (AFS) of core funded organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver 3 workshops for Annually Funded organisation in 2020/21. 	2021/22	Better understanding of the composition, and underrepresentation of any Section 75 groups, within the NI Arts Sector.

Action Measure	Key performances indicator	Timescale	Outcome
3. Conduct an audit of inequality to monitor equality of engagement in the arts; including further research to fill data gaps identified during the 5 Year Framework consultation relating to equality and diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Audit of inequality completed by 2021/22. 	2021/22	ACNI has a better understanding of the barriers preventing engagement in the arts, and reflect this in future policy development.
4. Based on the independent review ensure that the premium payments award is fit for purpose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Re - instatement of premium payment award / number of awards annually 	2021/22	Arts programmes are more accessible by removing barriers to engagement and participation.
5. Improved visibility of Section 75 groups by promoting positive attitudes through ACNI media releases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of communications releases with images of or reference to Section 75 groups. 	Annually	General public are more aware of section 75 artists' work and that positive attitudes towards a diverse artistic sector are promoted.
6. ACNI provide equality awareness training to staff members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver 2 training programmes per annum. 	2020/21	ACNI staff has a better understanding of the challenges ad barriers faced by Section 75 groups.
7. Review assessment process and guidance notes to ensure ACNI grants are accessible towards Section 75 groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of guidance notes reviewed 	2023/24	Artists and applicants whose first language is not English are better able to access ACNI grant awards.