

# Equality Action Plan April 2017 – March 2021



**Belfast**  
City Council

**Purpose – what is the Equality Action Plan for?**

This Equality Action Plan runs from April 2017 until March 2021, and contributes to our compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It is also a plan which outlines how we will address the key inequalities in our ambitions to create a city in which people love to live, learn, invest, work and visit. The Equality Action Plan is informed by an Audit of Inequalities carried out in 2015/16.

**Strategic context: Belfast City Council working in partnership to deliver the Community Plan**

Belfast City Council is the city's lead partner for the new duty of Community Planning which was introduced in April 2015. The council is responsible for establishing the process of community planning and for ensuring the development and implementation of the city's first community plan, *The Belfast Agenda*, in April 2017.

The *Belfast Agenda* seeks to improve the lives and wellbeing outcomes of all citizens in Belfast and to ensure the city is a place where people want to work, study, visit and invest. The *Belfast Agenda* has identified five long term aspirations for the city:

- Everyone in Belfast benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy
- Belfast is a welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive city for all
- Everyone in Belfast fulfils their potential
- Everyone in Belfast experiences good health and wellbeing
- Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally friendly city

The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 and the supporting statutory community planning guidance highlight the need to promote equality of opportunity as a key objective for community plans. The *Belfast Agenda* explicitly identifies 'equality and good relations' as one of its underpinning shared values and seeks to address key inequalities across the city.

To this end, this Equality Action Plan outlines actions that the council will deliver with its community planning partners as part of the Belfast Agenda, through the community planning process.

### **Corporate context: Belfast City Council's new corporate plan**

Belfast City Council is committed to promoting equality and good relations in all areas of the work we do. For us, addressing inequalities is about what we can do to create a fairer society and recognises that equality and good relations are issues for us all. We don't all start from the same place and to create a fairer, peaceful society we need to recognise the diversity in our communities. We need to continue to consider how the characteristics protected by Section 75 may have on the life chances of members of all of our communities and better understand the relationship between these characteristics and the role that socio-economic status has in creating, or contributing to, inequalities.

This Equality Action Plan sets out the actions to be delivered by Belfast City Council and demonstrates how we will mainstream equality and good relations and utilise an equality framework to help us to respond to new thinking on equality outcomes and the new challenges.

### **Framework for this action plan**

The Equality Action Plan is built around four key priorities in how we will tackle inequalities:

- A. Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- B. Understanding our communities through data and consultation
- C. Delivering services accessible to all
- D. Developing a skilled and diverse workforce

Each priority includes a series of actions with a strategic owner and the equality-related outcome which should be achieved.

### Priority A: Leadership, Partnership and Organisational Commitment

We know that strategic leadership – both political and managerial – is key to improving equality and good relations outcomes, and promoting diversity. This organisational commitment goes hand in hand with working in partnership to make the best use of our resources in an ever challenging environment. Fairness in how we comply with legislation, procure goods and services and communicate with our rate payers will highlight Belfast's growth as a diverse city.

Action	How will we know when we have achieved this?	Timescale	Responsibility	Equality-related outcome	Strategic owner
A1 Address inequalities through the Belfast Agenda	Performance framework for the Belfast Agenda to be developed	2017-21	Strategic Planning & Policy Manager	Local vision and priorities are underpinned by equality	BCC/ Community Planning Partnership (CPP)
A2 Embed Equality and Good Relations in new Corporate Plan	Action has been completed Y/N	2017-21	Strategic Planning & Policy Manager / EDO	Demonstration of effective leadership	BCC
A3 Emerging strategic programmes incorporate the equality framework e.g. Growing the Belfast Economy, Employability and Skills, Fostering Inclusive Growth, Smart City, Local Development Plan etc	Action has been completed Y/N	2017-21	Responsible Chief Officers	Promotion of equality and diversity outcomes in strategic programmes	BCC

<b>Action</b>	<b>How will we know when we have achieved this?</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Equality-related outcome</b>	<b>Strategic owner</b>
A4 Develop and deliver an integrated programme of work to tackle health inequalities	Action has been completed Y/N	2017-18	Director of City & Neighbourhoods	Health inequalities are being addressed	BCC
A5 Deliver Disability Strategy (encompassing DDA and DDO measures)	Action has been completed Y/N	2017-21	Town Solicitor / Director of Organisational Development	Address inequalities faced by disabled people in employment, services and policies	BCC
A6 Deliver annual Good Relations Action Plan	Action has been completed Y/N	2017-21	Good Relations Manager	Promotion of good relations	BCC
A7 Develop and Deliver new Age-Friendly Belfast Plan	Action has been completed Y/N	2017-21	Director of City and Neighbourhoods	Promote Belfast as an Age-Friendly city	BCC
A8 Develop a Youth Framework and Action Plan	Action has been completed Y/N	2017-21	Director of City and Neighbourhoods	Promote participation and inclusion of children and young people	BCC
A9 Deliver LGB Action Plan	Action has been completed Y/N	2017-21	Director of Organisational Development	Address inequalities faced by LGB people in employment, services and policies	BCC
A10 Deliver Gender Action Plan	Action has been completed Y/N	2017-21	Director of Organisational Development	Raised awareness of gender inequalities internally, in service	BCC

Action	How will we know when we have achieved this?	Timescale	Responsibility	Equality-related outcome	Strategic owner
				design and our policies	
A11 Deliver Race Action Plan	Action has been completed Y/N	2017-21	Director of Organisational Development	Raised awareness of racial inequalities internally, in service design and our policies	BCC
A12 Develop the Equality & Diversity Network	Action has been completed Y/N	ongoing	Director of Organisational Development / Town Solicitor	Co-ordinate and raise awareness of inequality-related issues across the organisation	BCC
A13 Implementation of Equality Scheme	Annual report to ECNI	ongoing	Town Solicitor / EDO	Compliance with the council's Equality Scheme	BCC
A14 Review and develop new Equality Scheme 2020-25	Action has been completed Y/N	2019 - 20	Town Solicitor / EDO	Compliance with Section 75 of Northern Ireland Act	BCC
A15 Hold bi-annual meetings of Equality Consultative Forum	Action has been completed Y/N	2017 - 21	Town Solicitor / EDO	Policies promoted through consultation and engagement with equality groups	BCC
A16 Review the role of the council's external Equality Consultative Forum	Action has been completed Y/N	2018/19	Town Solicitor / EDO	Align Equality Consultative Forum with relevant consultation and engagement	BCC

Action	How will we know when we have achieved this?	Timescale	Responsibility	Equality-related outcome	Strategic owner
				mechanisms	
A17 Scope option to develop an internal and external Equality Forum within the emerging Community Planning Partnership	Action has been completed Y/N	2018/19	Strategic Planning Manager / Town Solicitor	Collaborative approach to key inequalities	CPP
A18 Develop and deliver a communications plan to promote equality and diversity in the organisation internally and externally	Action has been completed Y/N	2017-21	Corporate Communications Manager / HR/OD, EDO	Raised awareness and increased understanding of equality and diversity issues	BCC

### Priority B: Understanding our communities through information and consultation

Our society is becoming more diverse. Today it is impossible to assume we know the composition of our communities – we have to find that out through gathering information known as data. The prosperity and cohesion of all people and communities can be affected by age, gender, marital status; if you have, or have not, a disability or dependents, religious and/ or racial background, political opinion and different sexual orientations. It is also important to understand the different needs within communities, for examples there are many forms of disability, and like the other Section 75 characteristics, every individual straddles all of the groups in some way, with great differences, as well as similarities between socio-economic groups.

Consultation and engagement with our communities will also help us to understand their needs better and we need to use different ways of will involving communities and neighbourhoods.

Action	How will we know when we have achieved this?	Timescale	Responsibility	Equality-related outcome	Strategic owner
B1 Develop an appropriate system to collect information about communities' needs and aspirations.	Action has been completed Y/N	2017/18	Strategic Planning & Policy Manager / Statistician / EDO	Relevant, proportionate and appropriate information collected to inform decision making	BCC
B2 Services use relevant city data when developing policies and services	Usage figures	2018/21	Corporate and Departmental Policy Officers / EDO	Available data will be analysed and used to shape policies and services	BCC



<b>Action</b>	<b>How will we know when we have achieved this?</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Equality-related outcome</b>	<b>Strategic owner</b>
B3 Develop a city dashboard to share city data including equality-related information between community planning partners and publish to citizens	Action has been completed Y/N  Usage figures	2018/19	Strategic Planning Manager / Statistician	Effective and efficient of sharing information between community planning partners	BCC
B4 Establish an appropriate mechanism for Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) representation and facilitate participation of CVS in the community planning process	Established Y/N  Number of meetings per year	2017/18	Director of City & Neighbourhoods / Town Solicitor/ Strategic Planning & Policy Manager	Effective and inclusive consultation and engagement	CPP
B5 Roll out corporate consultation and engagement plan	Action has been completed Y/N	2017/18	Strategic Planning & Policy Manager / Policy Officer	Effective and inclusive consultation and engagement	BCC

**Priority C: Services accessible to all**

Providing services, whether provided directly or procured / commissioned, remains central to what we do and through the Equality Action Plan this priority will be central to how we do business.

<b>Action</b>	<b>How will we know when we have achieved this?</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Equality-related outcome</b>	<b>Strategic owner</b>
C1 Promoting equality and diversity embedded in departmental business plans	Action has been completed Y/N	2017-21	All Chief Officers	Consideration of equality is 'designed in' to service delivery and the planning of policies, projects and programmes	BCC
C2 Support departments in carrying out equality screenings of emerging policies	Equality screening outcome report	Ongoing	Town Solicitor / EDO	Compliance with the council's Equality Scheme	BCC
C3 Annual reporting to the Equality Commission	Action has been completed Y/N	Annual	Town Solicitor / EDO	Compliance with the council's Equality Scheme	BCC
C4 Advice and guidance to services who wish to promote participation and inclusion for underrepresented groups	Ongoing work	Ongoing	Town Solicitor / EDO / departments	Our services are more accessible	BCC

<b>Action</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Equality-related outcome</b>	<b>Strategic owner</b>
C5 Facilitated testing of website by people with different abilities, including online forms and transactions	Bi-annual testing and implementation of issues identified	2017-21	External Communications Manager	Increased access to information and services	BCC
C6 Benchmarking of website by an external organisation	Bi-annual bench marking and implementation of issues identified	2017-21	External Communications Manager	Good practice in providing access to information and services	BCC
C7 Scoping development of a range of inclusive communication channels to meet different needs	Action has been completed Y/N	2018-19	External Communications Manager	Most appropriate methods of communications identified and supported	BCC

### Priority D: Skilled and diverse workforce

The ability to deliver responsive services to increasingly diverse communities will depend in a large part on the composition, skills, understanding and commitment of a workforce in how we build their capacity and understanding of the need to address inequalities. Through the development of a workforce which is broadly representative of the communities it serves the Council will deliver better outcomes for all.

Action	How will we know when we have achieved this?	Timescale	Responsibility	Equality-related outcome	Strategic owner
D1 Learning and development programme developed and delivered	Number of training events held	Ongoing	HR/OD, GRU, EDO/Services	Increased staff awareness of equality and diversity issues	BCC
D2 Mechanisms to monitor the diversity of the workforce and applicants are further developed	Action has been completed Y/N	2017-18	HR/OD	Profile of workforce is broadly representative of the community it serves	BCC
D3 Implementation of Organisational Development Strategy	Action has been completed Y/N	2017-21	HR/OD	Organisation developed to deliver responsive services to diverse communities	BCC

**Glossary**

EDO – Equality and Diversity Officer

HR/OD – Human Resources and Organisational Development

GRU – Good Relations Unit