

# Equality and Diversity Framework April 2017 – March 2021

Appendix 1

## Accessibility

Documents are available, on request, in alternative formats - Braille, audio, large print, easy read. The council will also consider requests to produce it in other languages. If you require the Action Plan or consultation document in these or other formats please contact us:

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**Belfast**  
City Council

## **Purpose – what is the Equality and Diversity Framework for?**

This Equality and Diversity Framework runs from April 2017 until March 2021, this is a strategic level document which outlines how we will promote equality and diversity in our ambitions to create a city in which people love to live, learn, invest, work and visit. This Framework also contributes to our compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

## **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 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 and Diversity Framework outlines actions that the council will deliver with its community planning partners as part of the Belfast Agenda, through the community planning process, and how we mainstream equality and good relations in our actions.

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

Belfast City Council is committed to promoting equality and diversity 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. Good relations is also an important area of our work, as we seek to increasingly be recognised as a city that values diversity and encourages civic participation.

This Equality and Diversity Framework sets out the actions to be delivered by Belfast City Council and demonstrates how we will utilise the framework to help us to respond to new thinking on equality outcomes and the new challenges.

### **Framework Priorities**

The Equality and Diversity Framework is built around four key priorities in how we will tackle inequalities and promote diversity in our city:

- 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 timescale, strategic owner and the equality and diversity-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	Timescale	Responsibility	How does this action help to promote equality and diversity?	Strategic owner
A1 Address inequalities through the Belfast Agenda	2017-21	Community Planning Partners / Responsible Chief Officers	Inequalities and barriers are addressed	BCC/ Community Planning Partnership (CPP)
A2 Embed Equality and Diversity in new Corporate Plan	2017-21	Strategic Planning & Policy Manager / EDO	Demonstration of effective leadership in promoting equality and diversity	BCC
A3 Develop and deliver an integrated plan to tackle health inequalities across the city	2017-18	Director of City & Neighbourhoods	Health inequalities are being addressed	BCC
A4 Deliver Disability Strategy (encompassing DDA and DDO measures)	2017-21	City Solicitor / Head of HR	Address inequalities faced by disabled people in employment, services and policies	BCC
A5 Deliver an integrated plan to improve good relations	2017-21	Director of City and Neighbourhoods / Good Relations Manager	Promotion of good relations	BCC

<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>How does this action help to promote equality and diversity?</b>	<b>Strategic owner</b>
A6 Develop an Age-Friendly Action Plan 2018-21 through HASP and deliver programmes of work supporting older people and encouraging Active Ageing	2017-21	Director of City and Neighbourhoods	Promote Belfast as an Age-Friendly city	BCC
A7 Develop and deliver an integrated children and young people framework and work programme	2017-21	Director of City and Neighbourhoods	Promote participation and inclusion of children and young people	BCC
A8 Deliver LGB Action Plan	2017-21	Head of HR	Address inequalities faced by LGBT people in employment, services and policies	BCC
A9 Deliver Gender Action Plan	2017-21	Head of HR	Raised awareness of gender inequalities internally, in service design and our policies	BCC
A10 Deliver Race Action Plan	2017-21	Head of HR	Raised awareness of racial inequalities internally, in service design and our policies	BCC
A11 Deliver a city and neighbourhood community safety programme	2017-21	Director of City and Neighbourhoods / Community Safety Manager	We will work to make communities safer for all people	BCC

<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>How does this action help to promote equality and diversity?</b>	<b>Strategic owner</b>
A12 Develop the Equality & Diversity Network	2017/18	City Solicitor/ Head of HR	Co-ordinate and raise awareness of inequality-related issues across the organisation	BCC
A13 Implementation of Equality Scheme	ongoing	City Solicitor / EDO	Compliance with the council's Equality Scheme	BCC
A14 Review and develop new Equality Scheme 2020-25	2019 - 20	City Solicitor / EDO	Compliance with Section 75 of Northern Ireland Act	BCC
A15 Hold bi-annual meetings of Equality Consultative Forum	2017 - 21	City Solicitor / EDO	Policies promoted through consultation and engagement with equality groups	BCC
A16 Review the role of the council's external Equality Consultative Forum	2017/18	City Solicitor / EDO	Align Equality Consultative Forum with relevant consultation and engagement mechanisms	BCC
A17 Scope option to develop an internal and external Equality Forum within the emerging Community Planning Partnership	2018/19	Strategic Planning Manager / City 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	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.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>How does this action help to promote equality and diversity?</b>	<b>Strategic owner</b>
B1 Develop an appropriate system to collect information about communities' needs and aspirations.	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	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>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>How does this action help to promote equality and diversity?</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	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	2017/18	Director of City & Neighbourhoods / City Solicitor/ Strategic Planning & Policy Manager	Effective and inclusive consultation and engagement	CPP
B5 Roll out corporate consultation and engagement plan	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>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>How does this action help to promote equality and diversity?</b>	<b>Strategic owner</b>
C1 Demonstrated promotion of equality and diversity embedded in departmental business plans	2017-21	All Chief Officers	Promoting equality and diversity '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	Ongoing	City Solicitor / EDO	Compliance with the council's Equality Scheme	BCC
C3 Annual reporting to the Equality Commission	Annual	City Solicitor / EDO	Compliance with the council's Equality Scheme	BCC
C4 Advice and guidance for services to promote participation and inclusion for underrepresented groups	Ongoing	City Solicitor / EDO / departments	Our services are more accessible	BCC

C5 Facilitated testing of website by people with different abilities, including online forms and transactions	2017-21	Corporate Communications Manager	Increased access to information and services	BCC
C6 Benchmarking of website by an external organisation	2017-21	Corporate 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	2018-19	Corporate 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 promote equality and diversity. Through the development of a workforce which is broadly representative of the communities it serves the Council will deliver better outcomes for all.

Action	Timescale	Responsibility	How does this action help to promote equality and diversity?	Strategic owner
D1 Learning and development programme developed and delivered	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	2017-18	HR/OD	Profile of workforce is broadly representative of the community it serves	BCC
D3 Implementation of Organisational Development Strategy	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