

---

# Section 75 Equality Action Plan Consultation Document

---

August 2019

# Annex B: Department for Communities' Section 75 Action Plan 2019–2022 Response Template

## Response template

### Confidentiality of Information

The Department for Communities processes personal data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and in most circumstances this means that personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Name	Lisa McKee
Position	Democratic Services Officer
Organisation	Belfast City Council
Address	Room 117 City Hall Belfast BT1 5GS

Do you agree with the actions that have been included in the draft Section 75 Action Plan?

**Yes**

**No**

**Are there any actions not included that you feel should be included? If so, please outline these below:**

#### Infrastructure and Community Development

Whilst the programmes and actions are welcome, we feel that a greater emphasis on community development is required to enable and equip particular individuals and communities to avail of the support and initiatives available. We are particularly conscious of the need to build confidence and resilience in young people generally and those further removed from the workplace. Joint initiatives with other government departments and community planning partnerships will be required to ensure a greater joined up person and community centred approach to addressing the inequalities.

It is important therefore, that any equality schemes build on this partnership working ethos from the outset. To ensure that this happens and is supported, a particular action design to put in place these building blocks and infrastructure is required. This could be captured under the action heading of “Community Planning” with bespoke actions included that are designed to support collaboration, understanding need and impact (see below) and addressing “voice poverty”. Community development is essential for effective community planning and we would welcome greater acknowledgment and support for this. In addition, we would suggest that there is a need for greater emphasis and support for community engagement, as part of community planning and over and above the focus on women’s empowerment.

Enabling seldom heard voices and those who are in voice poverty, would help address many of the inequalities and barriers that people face. Voice poverty is when people are unable to influence the decisions that affect their lives and are excluded from the decision-making process. It means that their voices are not heard, or even ignored, by decision makers. Often we speak to the communities that are easiest to reach and we know their views are not necessarily representative of the wider community. Government and the public sector need to do more to improve how we involve underrepresented groups, including young people in the LGBT+Q communities and minority ethnic communities. An action that relates to working partners with community planning partners to improve how we engage and involve community groups and organisations which work with those groups experiencing voice poverty would be welcome.

#### Partnership Working

We would encourage the ongoing partnership working between the Department and local government to co-design the delivery of actions to meet the needs of local areas as it is essential to ensure alignment between regional programmes and the local areas and labour markets.

#### Cultural Strategy

We are of the view that the Department should consider including the Council’s new ten-year Cultural Strategy which will create new investment models to grow a more sustainable cultural eco-system while also encouraging a more diverse and open definition of what we mean by culture.

### Place Based Approaches

The need for place based approaches should be recognised within the delivery of the actions. Opportunities to develop further place-based specific actions that will align to the work of the Belfast Region City Deal should also be considered.

### **Any other general comments you wish to make?**

### Equality Data and Impact

The Equality Scheme is written at quite a high level and greater consideration may be needed to delve into more specific equality groups and implications. For example, the document does not make reference to travellers or young people in/leaving care, both of whom face particular challenges and inequalities. Nor does it recognise the impact on people with multiple identities and how this impacts on inequality. A better understanding of the needs of particular groups and the interdependencies between S75 groups is needed if we are to make a real difference. However, this raises key issues regarding the availability and use of equality data.

The Council and our community planning partners have also found it challenging to access meaningful information at a local level across the various S75 categories. A joined-up approach to developing more effective data and, in particular measurements of impact, would be helpful in moving forward. This could perhaps be encapsulated within the community planning programme of work as referenced above.

### Outcomes Based Accountability

Embedding equality considerations within an OBA approach is another areas of development which would need further consideration as we move forward regionally through the Programme for Government and locally through community plans. For many of the programmes and interventions set out within the action plan, there is an opportunity afforded through community planning to co-design and support integrated delivery across government and within the community planning partners.

The Council remains committed to working with the Department to maximise the impact of community planning at both a city and local level. There are real opportunities to take a more co-ordinated and targeted approach to addressing many of the challenges facing the city including, for example, the “Local Works” agenda.

**Thank you for completing this proforma.**

Please return your completed proforma to  
**equality.unit@communities-ni.gov.uk** on or before **15 November 2019**