

Strategic Investment Board Limited

Equality Scheme

Drawn up in accordance with Section 75 of  
the Northern Ireland Act 1998

and approved by the Equality Commission in  
November 2005

Summary

Strategic Investment Board Limited.  
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## **1. Section 75 duties**

Under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, SIB is required to draw up an Equality Scheme setting out how equality of opportunity will be promoted through the implementation of all functions.

Section 75 imposes a duty to promote equality of opportunity between people in 9 categories and to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between people of different religious beliefs, political opinion or racial group.

The 9 categories of people are –

- those with different religious beliefs, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status and sexual orientation
- men and women generally
- people with a disability and those without
- people with dependants and those without.

We are committed to the fulfilment of Section 75 duties in all areas of responsibility. The SIB Equality Scheme, which sets out a series of principles and an action plan to implement the new tasks identified, was approved by the Equality Commission in November 2005. This document summarises the Equality Scheme and sets out what we intend to do to implement it.

## **2. Consultation**

A commitment to full and meaningful consultation lies at the heart of our Equality Scheme. We recognise the importance of consultation on all matters relating to Section 75 duties and we will apply best practice guidelines when carrying out consultation. In particular, we will try our best to make all consultations timely, open and inclusive.

We will consult as widely as possible and include any organisation or group which has a particular interest in our work. We will apply the following principles when consulting –

- we will begin as early as possible
- we will aim to allow 2 months for all consultations, where possible

- we will work with groups representing people in the Section 75 categories to identify the best ways to consult
- we will use different methods of consultation for different groups according to their needs – methods might include face to face meetings, advisory groups, surveys, consultative panels and Internet discussions
- we will make the language in our consultation documents as clear as possible
- we will give extra consideration to the needs of young people and people with learning disabilities
- we will provide sufficient information so that those we consult can consider the full implications of our proposals
- we will take steps to make sure there is full participation at any consultation meetings – this will include careful consideration of, among other things, the time of day, the suitability of the venue, how the meeting is run and child care arrangements.

### **3. Impact of policies**

The Equality Scheme sets out how we will assess the impact of our policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity. We will consider the impact of all our current policies through a process called “screening”. We will look at each policy in terms of whether there is –

- higher or lower participation or uptake (by the different groups within the 9 categories)
- different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in different groups
- any opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations
- indications (in earlier consultation) that particular policies create problems for particular groups.

If a policy is likely to create any of these situations then we will consider conducting an “equality impact assessment”. This is a thorough review of a policy, including consultation with everyone affected by it, which can result in suggestions for change.

We will consult on the results of the screening during the winter of 2005/06 and complete the process by June 2006.

In future whenever we are developing a new policy – or revising an existing one – we will screen the policy at as early a stage as possible and consult on the results of the screening. If necessary, we will carry out equality impact assessments on these policies before any decision is made and take the results into account when making decisions.

#### **4. Monitoring**

By February 2006 we will put in place a system to monitor the impact of our policies on the different groups of people in Section 75. Some of the information we will need to collect is personal and so we will act sensitively at all times.

If the monitoring shows that a policy is having more negative impact on equality of opportunity than we thought, we will revise the policy to reduce or remove the negative impacts. If the monitoring shows that there are new opportunities to promote equality of opportunity, we will revise the policy to take advantage of them.

We will review the monitoring results every year and report the results as part of our annual report to the Equality Commission.

#### **5. Access to information**

We will publish the results of the screening of any policy, the results of any equality impact assessments and what we find out through the monitoring process. The Equality Scheme contains a list of groups which we will inform but we will also make information available to the general public. We will do this by issuing press releases, obtaining media coverage and publishing information on our website.

We will make sure that all this information is fully accessible by –

- publishing everything in a timely manner
- making the language as clear as possible
- making documents available, on request, in alternative formats such as Braille, disk and audio cassette
- making documents available, on request, in minority languages for those who may have difficulties with information provided only in English

- giving extra consideration to the needs of young people and people with learning disabilities.

During 2006 we will review our arrangements for providing information to make sure that they are effective, taking account of best practice guidelines.

## **6. Staff training**

We will include targets relating to our Section 75 duties in our three year corporate plan and the annual business plan, as appropriate, and report progress in our annual report. Implementation of Section 75 duties will be included in the personal performance plans of all staff who are directly engaged in this work. In addition, a commitment to Section 75 duties will be included in all job descriptions.

All staff will be made aware of the Equality Scheme and the duties imposed by Section 75 and we will make sure that all new staff are made aware as part of their induction. We will draw up a programme for the delivery of more focused training for staff in management roles and those involved in research and data collection, policy development, service design, monitoring and evaluation. We will evaluate the effectiveness of the training programme on a regular basis.

All staff will have access to the full version of the Equality Scheme.

## **7. Review**

We will review progress on implementing our Equality Scheme every year and report to the Equality Commission. We will also undertake a thorough review of the Equality Scheme after 5 years, or earlier if appropriate.

## **8. Contacts**

The Chief Executive is accountable to the Board for developing, maintaining and reviewing the Equality Scheme. The main contact for enquiries and complaints is –

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## **ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EQUALITY SCHEME**

A detailed action plan is included in the full Equality Scheme in Appendix 4. The table below summarises the key actions and target dates.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Target Dates</b>
Publish the approved Equality Scheme	December 2005
Integrate objectives and targets on Section 75 duties into the Corporate Plan and annual Business Plan	December 2005 and annually from April 2006
Establish systems to provide access to information	December 2005
Stage 1 screening consultation	Commencing January 2006
Draw up a detailed training plan for staff	December 2005
Implement the training plan	Commencing January 2006
Establish a system to monitor the impact of policies	February 2006
Stage 2 screening consultation	Commencing March 2006
Submit final screening report to the Equality Commission	June 2006
Submit annual report to the Equality Commission	Annually commencing June 2006
Equality impact assessments (as required)	Commencing June 2006
Review arrangements for providing access to information	October 2006
Review the extent to which the training objectives have been met	Annually commencing October 2006
Review all information obtained under the monitoring system	Annually commencing April 2007
Conduct a thorough review of the Equality Scheme	June 2010 (or earlier if appropriate)