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NICEM North West SUBMISSION

**Equality Scheme for the Derry City and Strabane
District Council**

October 2014

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM) is an independent non-governmental organisation. As an umbrella organisation¹ we represent the views and interests of black and minority ethnic (BME) communities.² Our mission is to work to bring about social change through partnership and alliance building, and to achieve equality of outcome and full participation in society. Our vision is of a society in which equality and diversity are respected, valued and embraced, that is free from all forms of racism, sectarianism, discrimination and social exclusion, and where human rights are guaranteed.
- 1.2 Under Schedule 9(4)(3)(a) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, public authorities are required to abide by the guidance of the Equality Commission (ECNI) in drafting their equality schemes. This constitutes a legal obligation on these authorities.

2. Chapter 2 – Our Arrangements for Assessing Our Compliance with the Section 75 Duties

- 2.1 Current guidance provided by the ECNI recommends that public authorities include a section on actions plans/measures in this chapter, committing to the development of an action plan.³ The ECNI asserts that such a commitment would be helpful in demonstrating the authority's commitment to satisfying its legal obligation to pay 'due regard' to the need to promote equality of opportunity and promote good relations.
- 2.2 It is disappointing, therefore, that the current draft equality scheme does not include such a section. An action plan is not only a clear demonstration of the public authority's commitment to tackling equality issues, but it is also a useful practical tool for consolidating, streamlining and demonstrating the actions that it intends to take and has taken to fulfil its legal obligations.

¹ Currently we have 27 affiliated BME groups as full members. This composition is representative of the majority of BME communities in Northern Ireland. Many of these organisations operate on an entirely voluntary basis.

² In this document "Black and Minority Ethnic Communities" or "Minority Ethnic Groups" or "Ethnic Minority" has an inclusive meaning to unite all minority communities. It is a political term that refers to settled ethnic minorities (including Travellers, Roma and Gypsy), settled religious minorities, migrants (EU and non-EU), asylum seekers and refugees and people of other immigration status united together against racism.

³ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, 'Model Equality Scheme' (2010) Available at: <<http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/ModelEqualityScheme2010.doc?ext=.doc>> [accessed 29/10/14] paras.2.11-2.18

2.3 It is further noted that the current draft equality scheme includes reference to its commitment on an action plan at paragraph 7.2, despite not making one under Chapter 2. Additionally, the development of an action plan is listed as a timetabled action under Appendix 3 of the draft scheme, which further adds to the confusion over this issue.

2.4 NICEM North West recommends that paragraphs 2.11-2.18 of the ECNI model equality scheme be included under Chapter 2 of the equality scheme, so that a clear, unambiguous commitment to the development of an action plan is made.

3. Chapter 3 – Our Arrangements for Consulting

3.1 Current guidance encourages public authorities to include details on what information or awareness-raising methods the authority will utilise to ensure the participation of consultees in consultations.⁴

3.2 While the Council's equality scheme does make mention some such measures under paragraph 3.2.5, it does not mention any measures to ensure participation from BME consultees, such as sending multi-lingual communiqués, or reaching out to umbrella groups.

3.3 NICEM North West recommends that the Council's equality scheme provide more detail under paragraph 3.2.5 as to how it intends to ensure that BME consultees are made aware of consultations, with sensitivity to the particular difficulties that may arise in accessing these communities.

4. Chapter 4 - Our Arrangements for Assessing, Monitoring and Publishing the Impact of Policies

4.1 Current ECNI guidance states that this chapter should detail the public authority's arrangements for collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data in order to assess any adverse impact of its policies.⁵

4.2 However, while the current draft equality scheme states that it has established systems to monitor the impact of its policies, no detail is provided on what these mechanisms are or how they operate.

⁴ ibid para.3.2.5

⁵ ibid p.23

4.3 NICEM North West recommends that further detail be provided as to what the Council’s mechanisms are for gathering and analysing quantitative and qualitative data, with a view to assessing the equality impact of its policies/actions.

5. Chapter 5 – Staff Training

5.1 ECNI guidance asserts that public authorities should provide information on the monitoring and evaluation procedures that they have in place to oversee the delivery of equality training to their staff. It is suggested that this information may include details such as the number of staff trained, the job roles of those trained etc.⁶

5.2 The current draft equality scheme, however, only commits to monitoring the equality profile of staff trained in order to ensure that training is inclusive.

5.3 NICEM North West recommends that additional detail be added, with commitments being made to oversee the number and job roles of staff trained.

6. Chapter 6 – Our Arrangements for Ensuring and Assessing Public Access to Information and Services We Provide

6.1 ECNI guidance states that public authorities should provide, under this chapter, information on the arrangements they have made to ensure that BME individuals have access to information provided by the authority.⁷

6.2 The current draft details some measures to facilitate access to information for individuals with a disability and for young people, but BME communities and any measures for ensuring that they may access information are not mentioned.

6.3 NICEM North West recommends that detail be provided, under paragraph 6.3 of the equality scheme and in compliance with ECNI guidance, on what measures will be taken by the Council to ensure that BME communities have access to information that the Council provides. This may include publishing documents in key minority languages or providing translations of documents upon request.

⁶ ibid para.5.6

⁷ ibid para.6.3

Appendices

7.1 ECNI guidance asserts that public authorities should provide, within the appendices, an organisational chart that provides an overview of the organisation concerned, including information on the people within this organisation and their roles.⁸

7.2 The current draft equality scheme does not provide any such overview, or contain a placeholder for the inclusion of such data at a later date.

7.3 NICEM North West recommends that an organisational chart be included within the appendices of the equality scheme, in compliance with ECNI guidance.

⁸ *ibid* p.37