**Equinet Evaluation Lab Meeting 29 January 2015**

**Strategic Planning - Indicators, Benchmarks and Targets**

**Equality Commission for Northern Ireland**

1. The Equality Commission is required by our Sponsoring Department, that is, the public service department under the Minister, to prepare both a

* Three year Corporate Plan and
* An annual Business Plan

These are approved by the Sponsoring Department and the Department is subsequently provided with quarterly reports on progress in achieving the objectives set out in these plans. (Given some political turbulence and the appointment of ten new Commissioners to our Executive Board, we had asked the Sponsoring Department for permission to postpone the development of the new Corporate Plan for 2015-18 to 2016-19).

1. The draft Plan for 2016-19 was prepared and it was issued for consultation in late December 2015. The consultation draft sets out our Commitment, our Vision, our Mission and Values. It also includes our principles and reminds readers of our powers and duties. These duties are derived from a number of legal statutes over a 20 year period. The legal framework enables us to advance equality through a range of mechanisms -

* Providing direct advice and support to individuals with complaints of discrimination
* Assisting organisations to meet the requirements of equality law
* Producing publications, running conferences and seminars
* Undertaking research and education activities
* Influencing policy makers
* Conducting investigations

We use a combination of our powers to encourage and to enforce changes to policies, practices and procedures in favour of greater equality and good relations.

We have identified and are currently consulting on four strategic priorities for (2016-19) the next three years. These are grounded in -

* Our legislative remit
* Our continuing duties to individuals
* Our duties to those who have responsibilities under the legislation
* The evidence of key inequalities which we have collected, and continue to collect
* The resources available to us

1. At present in the development of our three year plan for each priority we have specified the core components of the work we will undertake in order to meet the strategic priorities.
2. **Champion equality and good relations**

* Communicate the importance of the case for equality and good relations in Northern Ireland
* Communicate and reinforce the case for equality
* Work with partners to shape public policy including securing key commitments in the Programme for Government and the full implementation of Northern Ireland equality strategies
* Keep the equality legislation under review and champion a better legislative framework
* Intervene in a number of areas of strategic importance to secure change.

1. **Challenge Inequalities**

* Research and highlight key inequalities and the link between poverty, social exclusion and inequality
* Enhance the evidence base and highlight areas for action
* Engage with Government and other stakeholders to mainstream equality considerations and secure our policy recommendations
* Utilise international frameworks such as UNCRPD

1. **Put the legislation to work**

* Support, facilitate and challenge public bodies and the private sector to improve their policies and practices
* Use all our powers from advice and guidance through to compliance and enforcement
* Support employers and service providers to recognise that equality and good relations practices enhance organisational performance
* Use our powers of enforcement where necessary
* Ensure people know their rights under the legislation
* Challenge discrimination by supporting strategic cases
* Undertake investigations of complaints of failures to comply with Equality Schemes.

1. **Deliver equality effectively and efficiently**

* We will meet the challenge of financial constraint through continuous improvement and maximising the use of new technology
* A modern, professional and fit for purpose organisation
* Good governance and internal control
* A best practice employer
* Develop and extend online services

**Objectives and indicators**

The following provide an illustration of the range of indicators that will be used to measure progress against the strategic objectives. Targets will also be developed from these.

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| Strategic  priority | Objective | Illustrative Indicators |
| 1 | Reinforce the case for equality and good relations in Northern Ireland. | Commission communications strategy in place and fit for purpose.  Level of key stakeholder confidence. |
|  | Work with strategic partners to influence greater equality and good relations outcomes from key commitments in the Programme for Government. | Evidence of Commission messages/recommendations supported and used by key stakeholders. |
|  | A more effective and streamlined framework for equality and good relations protections. | Awareness of and support for Commission recommendations.  Number of key improvements secured or committed to. |
|  | Intervene in a number of areas of strategic importance where, through deploying the range of our powers, we are likely to secure change or challenge practices. | Number of interventions and changes made as a result.  Improved equality practice arising from the recommendations of the “Expecting Equality” investigation. |
| 2 | Focus on where key inequalities remain, enhancing the evidence base and highlighting areas for action  Engage with and challenge the Executive, government Departments and other key stakeholders to secure adoption of our policy recommendations to address the key inequalities. | Promotion of key inequalities publications and necessary actions  Evidence of stakeholder acceptance and reference to Commission statements and policy recommendations on key inequalities.  Evidence of progress by the Executive, Departments and stakeholders to address the key inequalities. |
|  | Use the leverage of obligations set out in key international frameworks to advance key Commission policy positions, including fulfilling our remit with NIHRC as the independent mechanism under the UNCRPD. | Evidence of awareness and support for Commission recommendations to selected international mechanisms (priorities: CERD, CEDAW, CRPD).  Reflection of Commission recommendations in International Committee concluding comments and recommendations to State parties. |
| 3 | Supporting high levels of compliance with legislative requirements and encouraging good practice  Maintain awareness and acceptance among employers and service providers of the importance of equality and good relations to enhance organisational performance. | Level of compliance with FETO duties and Equality Scheme and DAP commitments.  Delivery of effective information and advisory service.  Provision of good practice examples for responsibility holders. |
|  | Encourage improvements to organisational practices to address key inequalities and effectively deploy our powers of compliance and enforcement, where necessary | Evidence of improvements in:   * the access to goods, facilities and services for disabled people; * disabled people’s access to employment; * workplaces free from sectarianism, racism and homophobia; * overcoming barriers faced by BME workers; * women’s economic participation. |
|  | Empower individuals through knowledge of their rights, the remedies and potential resolutions to complaints available under the legislation. | Levels of awareness of individual rights and responsibilities.  Delivery effective advisory service to individuals for the anti-discrimination legislation and complaints procedures with public authorities and their Equality Schemes. |
|  | Challenge unlawful discrimination through the support of strategic cases.  Investigation of complaints of failure to comply with Equality Schemes | Appropriate redress obtained for complainants.  Evidence that lessons arising from legal casework have been publicised and adopted.  Changes made as a result of investigations |
| 4 | Maintain a modern, professional, fit for purpose organisation which provides value for money, while meeting the challenge of reduced funding. | Delivery of business objectives in cost effective manner.  Improvements in service delivery.  Level of stakeholder satisfaction.  Level of savings in accommodation, operational costs, staffing. |
|  | Maintain effective corporate governance and internal control. | External and internal audit outcomes |
|  | Demonstrate best practice as an employer and invest in our staff to ensure excellent service delivery. | Levels of staff and external stakeholder satisfaction.  Effective leadership and management.  External accreditations maintained or enhanced. |
|  | Develop and extend on-line service delivery | Increase in on-line service delivery across key areas of our work. |