

NORTH / SOUTH LANGUAGE BODY

FORAS NA GAEILGE

AUDIT OF INEQUALITIES AND EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

April 2015

1. INTRODUCTION

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland published Guidance on Section 75 in 2010 which recommends that public authorities undertake an 'Audit of Inequalities' to inform the development of new Equality Plans. The audit should comprise ***“a systematic review and analysis of inequalities which exist for service users and those affected by a public authority’s policies.”***

The guidance further recommends that public authorities develop ***“an action plan which details action measures relevant to a public authority’s functions, to promote equality of opportunity and good relations and address inequalities for the Section 75 categories. Action plans should outline the desired outcomes a public authority aims to achieve with related performance indicators and timescales.”***

The guidance emphasises the importance of linking equality action planning to corporate and business planning. It advises that ***“public authorities link the development of ... action plans to their corporate planning cycle, in order that equality of opportunity and good relations are incorporated and mainstreamed at a strategic level into the business of the public authority. At an operational level, we recommend that implementation of ... action plans are included in a public authority’s business planning cycle.”***

This report sets out the findings of the audit of inequalities carried out by Foras na Gaeilge and the draft equality action plan resulting from it. The action plan will be integrated with similar considerations by the Ulster-Scots Agency and consulted on for a 12 week period before being finalised. The final plan will then be reported to the Equality Commission.

2. FUNCTIONS

The North/South Language Body is a single Body reporting to the North/South Ministerial Council, but composed of two separate and largely autonomous agencies: the Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge. The Sponsor Departments for the Language Body are the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in Ireland.

Foras na Gaeilge has responsibility for the promotion of the Irish language on an all-island basis. It has a role in advising administrations, North and South, as well as public bodies and other groups in the private and voluntary sectors, in all matters relating to the Irish language. It also undertakes supportive projects and grant aids bodies and groups throughout the island of Ireland.

The functions of Foras na Gaeilge are:

- promoting the Irish language;
- facilitating and encouraging its use in speech and writing in public and private life in the South and, in the context of Part III of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, in Northern Ireland where there is appropriate demand;
- advising both administrations, public bodies and other groups in the private and voluntary sectors;
- undertaking supportive projects and grant aiding bodies and groups as considered necessary;
- undertaking research, promotional campaigns, and public and media relations;
- developing terminology and dictionaries;
- supporting Irish medium education and the teaching of Irish.

A policy framework is attached at Appendix A.

3. DESIRED OUTCOMES

Foras na Gaeilge works within the framework for the protection and development of the Irish language set by the Department for Communities (in Northern Ireland) and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Ireland).

In Northern Ireland Government policy is informed by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages which was adopted in 1992. With regard to Irish, the European Charter states that policies, legislation and practice are to include the following objectives and principles:

- the recognition of the Irish language as an expression of cultural wealth;
- the need for resolute action to promote the Irish language;
- the facilitation and/or the encouragement of the use of Irish in speech and writing in private and public life;
- the maintenance and development of links between groups using the Irish language;
- the provision of appropriate forms and means for the teaching and study of regional or minority languages at all appropriate stages.

The British and Irish Government's commitment to developing regional and minority languages in respect of both Irish and Ulster-Scots was confirmed by the British/Irish Agreement Act which established the North/South Language Body. Subsequently, in the St Andrews' Agreement, a commitment to develop a minority languages strategy was agreed and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure is taking the lead on developing this. A draft strategy for protecting and enhancing the Irish language was published and consulted on in 2013 but has not yet been finalised. The strategy aims to:

- create a framework where Irish can flourish and be shared by all who wish to use it;
- protect and support the development and learning of Irish; and
- promote wider understanding of the background to the Irish language.

The draft Strategy has the following objectives:

- to increase the number of those who can access Irish medium education;
- to increase the number of those that use public services through the Irish language; and
- to increase access to Irish language media.

Foras na Gaeilge will have a pivotal role in implementing the strategy.

Taking account of these aims, Foras na Gaeilge has developed five corporate objectives which define the desired outcomes:

Communication

To communicate effectively with interested parties and promote the effective marketing of Irish throughout the island of Ireland.

Policy, Planning & Research

To recommend policies and work programmes, to advise about them, to implement and monitor them in order to serve needs relating to the promotion of the language in the public and private sectors throughout the island of Ireland.

Status

To strengthen the status of the Irish language.

Acquisition

To support the learning, acquisition and strengthening of the Irish language through increasing the number of learning opportunities at all levels and improving the standard of teaching.

Use

To increase the use of Irish throughout the island of Ireland.

4. PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THE POLICIES

[‘In Northern Ireland’?] The work of Foras na Gaeilge has a direct effect on:

- the Irish speaking communities;
- funded Irish language organisations;
- those learning the language and about its attendant history and culture;
- the general public in Northern Ireland who attend festivals, events, exhibitions etc. or make use of learning materials;
- children and young people in schools and youth clubs and their teachers and leaders in particular the Irish Medium education sector;
- public, private and voluntary sector bodies;
- Scottish Gaelic communities (through partnership working);
- visitors and tourists;
- staff.

5. AVAILABLE DATA AND RESEARCH

5.1 Internal monitoring

Foras na Gaeilge has well developed systems for monitoring the achievements of core funded organisations. Monitoring may be both quantitative and qualitative but does not, at present, include the systematic collection of information relating to Section 75 equality categories.

Foras na Gaeilge conducts general equal opportunities monitoring of job applicants and makes an annual return to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on the community background and gender of all staff.

As part of the Equality Action Plan, Foras na Gaeilge will consider ways to extend both qualitative and quantitative monitoring to include additional equality categories.

5.2 NI Census 2011

Respondents to the 2011 NI Census were asked to indicate their ability to speak, read, write or understand Irish. Among usual residents aged 3 years and over, 11 per cent of people had some ability in Irish, compared with 10 per cent at the time of the last Census in 2001. The proportion of people aged 3 years and over who could speak, read, write and understand Irish was 3.7 per cent and 4.1 per cent said they could understand but not speak, read or write Irish.

In terms of age groups, people aged 12-15 were most likely to have some ability in Irish (20 per cent); those least likely to have such ability were aged 75 and over (6.2 per cent).

In terms of religion or religion brought up in, 90 per cent of those with some ability in Irish were or had been brought up as Catholics and 7.4 per cent as Protestants. Consistent with this, 21 per cent of people aged 3 and over who were or had been brought up as Catholics

had some ability in Irish in 2011, compared with 1.6 per cent of those who belonged to or had been brought up in Protestant denominations.

Drawing together both religion and age, and probably linked to the inclusion of the subject on the education curriculum and its particular popularity in non-Controlled schools, almost two-fifths (38 per cent) of people aged 12-15 who were or had been brought up as Catholics had some ability in Irish in 2011, compared with 1.6 per cent of those who were or had been brought up as Protestants.

Although 2.2 per cent of usual residents aged 3 and over were born in the republic of Ireland, they comprised 8.9 per cent of those with some ability in Irish.

Over two-thirds (68 per cent) of those with some ability in Irish had an Irish only national identity, 17 per cent felt Northern Irish only, 7 per cent British only.

5.3 NI Omnibus Survey 2007

Additional information about knowledge of Irish is available from the NI Omnibus Survey in 2007 which showed that overall 18% of the population had some knowledge of the language. The results were broken down by Section 75 categories (see Appendix B) and there were several categories where knowledge of the language was significantly lower, including:

- 2% for people brought up as Protestants;
- 6% of those aged 65 and over;
- 10% of those who were divorced, separated or widowed;
- 12% of disabled people; and
- 14% of males.

5.4 NI Omnibus Survey 2012

Public attitudes towards the Irish language in Northern Ireland were last obtained through the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey in 2012. Four questions of particular note were:

1. Attitudes towards Irish language usage – Are you in favour or against Irish language usage in Northern Ireland?
2. Opportunities for learning the Irish language – How much do you agree that pupils, who wish, should be able to take Irish as a subject at school? How much do you agree that there should be more opportunities for people to learn Irish across Northern Ireland?
3. Support for the Irish language – How much do you agree that the use of Irish should be supported and promoted throughout Northern Ireland?

The full results are shown in Appendix C and the main points were as follows:

Attitudes

Overall 35% of respondents were strongly or slightly in favour of Irish language use in Northern Ireland and 29% strongly or slightly against. The only categories where there were significant variations were age and religious belief: younger people tended to be more in favour than older people and a much higher percentage of Catholics were in favour (66%) than Protestants (13%). Among Protestants, 46% were against and 40% were neither in favour nor against.

Opportunities

Overall 80% of respondents strongly or slightly agreed that pupils, who wish, should be able to take Irish as a subject at school and only 8% strongly or slightly disagreed. There was very little variation by equality category, although only 73% of Protestants agreed, compared with 92% of Catholics.

53% of respondents strongly or slightly agreed that there should be more opportunities for people to learn Irish across Northern Ireland and 20% strongly or slightly disagreed. There were some variation in responses by age, marital status and religious belief:

- older people were more likely to disagree with 31% of those aged 55-64 disagreeing and 27% of those aged 65+;
- there was a higher rate of disagreement among those who were widowed (27%);
- there was a high level of agreement among Catholics (78%) and a low level among Protestants (36%). 30% of Protestants disagreed with the statement.

Support

Overall 42% of respondents strongly or slightly agreed that the use of Irish should be supported and promoted throughout Northern Ireland, whilst 35% strongly or slightly disagreed. Again, there was some variation in responses by age, marital status and religious belief:

- older people were more likely to disagree, with 49% of those aged 55-64 disagreeing and 43% of those aged 65+;
- there was a lower rate of agreement among those who were divorced, separated or widowed, although they were more likely to have no opinion than to disagree;

- there was a high level of agreement among Catholics (74%) and a low level among Protestants (18%). 54% of Protestants disagreed with the statement.

6. KEY INEQUALITIES

Drawing together the above information, there are a number of Section 75 groups who may be under-represented in terms of what Foras na Gaeilge is seeking to achieve.

6.1 Ability in the Irish language

Foras na Gaeilge has a corporate objective to increase the use of Irish throughout the island of Ireland. The Census results show that, in Northern Ireland, people who are, or were brought up as, Catholics are far more likely to have some ability in the Irish language than those brought up as Protestant. In addition, young people are far more likely to have some ability in Irish, probably as a result of the inclusion of the subject on the education curriculum. The 2007 Omnibus Survey demonstrated a low level of ability among Protestants and older people and also indicated that there may be lower levels of ability among men, disabled people and those who are divorced, separated or widowed. To some extent, the marital status results may be a reflection of the age profile.

6.2 Attitudes to the Irish language

Foras na Gaeilge has a corporate objective to communicate effectively with interested parties and promote the effective marketing of Irish throughout the island of Ireland. The 2012 Omnibus Survey showed that 15% of respondents were strongly in favour of the use of the Irish language in Northern Ireland and 20% slightly in favour whilst 35% were neither in favour nor against. Older people (aged 55+) and those brought up as Protestants demonstrated a higher level of opposition.

6.3 Opportunities for learning the Irish language

Foras na Gaeilge has a corporate objective to support the learning, acquisition and strengthening of the Irish language through increasing the number of learning opportunities at all levels and improving the standard of teaching. The 2012 Omnibus Survey showed that a high percentage (80%) of respondents strongly or slightly agreed that pupils, who wish, should be able to take Irish as a subject at school and that there was very little variation by equality category and 53% agreed that there should be more opportunities for people to learn Irish across Northern Ireland. Older people, Protestants and those who were widowed were more likely to disagree.

6.4 Support for the Irish language

Foras na Gaeilge has a corporate objective to strengthen the status of the Irish language. The 2012 Omnibus Survey showed that 42% of respondents agreed that the use of Irish should be supported and promoted throughout Northern Ireland but older people, Protestants and those who were divorced, separated or widowed were more likely to disagree.

7. EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

The above analysis shows that, in developing the Equality Action Plan, Foras na Gaeilge needs to consider how to increase awareness and participation among the following groups:

- older people;
- those brought up as Protestants;
- those who are separated, divorced or widowed.

Foras na Gaeilge considers that the marital status variations in responses to the 2012 Omnibus Survey may be a reflection of the age profile results; it would be difficult to target these particular groups. However, Foras na Gaeilge also considers that there are opportunities to increase participation by people from black and minority ethnic communities.

There are already a number of initiatives in place that have a particular impact on older people and Protestants. For example:

- **Foras na Gaeilge advertises widely all schemes and invitations to apply for funding and does so across a broad spectrum of media;**
- **Work Areas assigned to two of the six new Lead Organisations from the community & voluntary sector and funded by Foras na Gaeilge are 'language awareness' and 'youth networks' (NSMC Joint Communique of 10 July 2013). This includes cross-community awareness-raising and providing information about and opportunities to learn the language which are less likely to have been available to older people previously, youth networks aim to build networks, both real and virtual;**
- **Foras na Gaeilge funds the cross-community work of the East Belfast Mission in demonstrating the shared heritage that is the Irish language and its attendant culture;**
- **Foras na Gaeilge funds two scholarship schemes which facilitates educational courses in the Gaeltacht. One for families and another for adults, thus enabling families and older people to partake in life-long learning opportunities.**

Foras na Gaeilge also needs to consider how current monitoring can be extended to provide increased information about the effect of their work on different Section 75 groups.

Monitoring information will be essential to determine whether the measures in the Equality Action Plan are having the desired effect.

The draft Action Plan is set out overleaf. Following consultation, a final version of the Action Plan will be developed and submitted to the Equality Commission.

DRAFT EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

Section 75 groups	Action	Link to strategic objectives	Timescale	Desired outcomes	Performance measures
1. Protestants	Part of the brief of the lead organisation dealing with awareness. Funding awarded to the East Belfast Mission to promote Irish in the PUL community	<p>corporate objective to communicate effectively with interested parties and promote the effective marketing of Irish throughout the island of Ireland.</p> <p>a corporate objective to support the learning, acquisition and strengthening of the Irish language</p>	One year and three year cycles	Increased awareness of the Irish language and the culture associated with it;	No. of learners and attendees at EBM events; Awareness of such initiatives/coverage of such events in relevant media
2. Older people	Diploma in teaching Irish to adults offered by National University of Ireland Maynooth. Adult classes through Scéim Phobail Gaeilge and other funded organisations. Commitment to Lifelong learning in accordance	<p>corporate objective to communicate effectively with interested parties and promote the effective marketing of Irish throughout the island of Ireland.</p> <p>a corporate objective to</p>	Annual and academic year funding cycles	Increased awareness of the Irish language and the culture associated with it	No. of participants in life-long learning initiatives associated with the Irish language; Awareness of such initiatives/coverage of such events in relevant media

	with DCAL learning strategy	support the learning, acquisition and strengthening of the Irish language through increasing the number of learning opportunities at all levels and improving the standard of teaching			
3. BME groups	Included as part of the brief of of the lead organisation dealing with awareness.	<p>corporate objective to communicate effectively with interested parties and promote the effective marketing of Irish throughout the island of Ireland.</p> <p>a corporate objective to support the learning, acquisition and strengthening of the Irish language</p>	Annual funding cycle	Increased awareness of the Irish language and the culture associated with it	No. of participants in life-long learning initiatives associated with the Irish language; Awareness of such initiatives/coverage of such events in relevant media
4. All groups	<p>4.1 Review current monitoring arrangements</p> <p>4.2 Introduce additional</p>	Policy, planning and research	2015-16	Increased information on participation in activities on people in all Section 75	<p>4.1 Completion of review</p> <p>4.2 No. of additional</p>

	monitoring questions where practicable to increase information on participation by different Section 75 groups			categories	categories included in monitoring
5. All groups	5.1 Review and update audit of inequalities 5.2 Review and update equality action plan 5.3 Consult on major changes to the action plan	Policy, planning and research	Annually in November	Increased information to assist with corporate and business planning	5.1 Completion of review 5.2 Completion of review of equality action plan 5.3 No. of comments received during consultation
Section 75 groups	Action	Link to strategic objectives	Timescale	Desired outcomes	Performance measures
6. All groups	6.1 Further mainstream Section 75 considerations into strategic and business planning cycles	Policy, planning and research	Annually in November	Values attaching to Section 75 to form an integral and explicit part of future Corporate and Business Plans	6.1 Evidence of Section 75 considerations within Corporate and Business Planning cycles
7. All groups	7.1 Ensure all external contracts include reference to Section 75	Policy, planning and research	Ongoing	All those who carry out work on behalf of the Agency in NI must	7.1 External contracts containing a clause outlining Section 75

	obligations.			uphold Section 75 responsibilities falling on the Agency	responsibilities attaching to the terms of the contract.
8. All groups	8.1 Extend staff and applicant monitoring to capture data on all Section 75 grounds for staff in NI	Policy, planning and research	2015-16	Robust profiling data across all nine Section 75 grounds on those employed by the Agency and those seeking employment in NI	8.1 Monitoring information on staff and applicants in NI across all nine Section 75 grounds

Appendix A

**NORTH / SOUTH LANGUAGE BODY
FORAS NA GAEILGE: LIST OF POLICIES**

	Policy area	Activities	Those affected	Performance measures
1	Marketing	Media relations Campaigns Sponsorship Website Newsletter Attendance at major events	All members of the public	
2	Core funding	Grant aid programmes Partnership Forum Language Development Forum	Irish language organisations and the people they interact with	
3	Support to the public sector	Translation	Public sector bodies and	

		Advice and information Terminology support Irish Language Officers Programme Training	their clients/customers	
4	Support to the private sector	Consultancy services Guidance Support materials Training Sponsorship Research	Private sector bodies and their clients/customers	
	Policy area	Activities	Those affected	Performance measures
5	Support for learning opportunities	Education policy Summer camps Liofa DCAL Learning Strategy Membership of key organisations Teaching and learning materials	Pupils, teachers, adult learners and families	
6	Translation and publications	Training Accreditation Development of computer aided translation facilities Dictionary strategy Terminology policy Books programme	Translators and those benefitting from translations	
7	Governance		Board members and staff	
8	Financial management		Staff	

9	Human Resources		Staff	
10	Organisational development		Staff	

Number of people who speak the Irish language in Northern Ireland 2007

	Has some knowledge %	Has no knowledge %	Base
All	18	82	1211
Male	14	86	514
Female	21	79	697
Aged 16-24	29	71	130
Aged 25-34	22	78	204
Aged 35-49	18	82	345
Aged 50-64	19	81	244
Aged 65 and over	6	94	288
Catholic	39	61	473
Protestant	2	98	663
Single	24	76	373
Married / cohabiting	17	83	559
Divorced / separated / widowed	10	90	279
Has disability	12	88	278
Has no disability	20	80	933
With dependants	22	78	434
No dependants	16	84	777

Source: NI Omnibus Survey 2007

Data from Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey 2010

Table 1: Are you in favour or against Irish language usage in Northern Ireland?

	Strongly in favour %	Slightly in favour %	Neither in favour nor against %	Slightly against %	Strongly against %	Don't know / Refusal %	Base
All	15	20	35	12	17	1	1141
Male	17	19	30	13	19	1	525
Female	14	20	39	11	15	0	616
Aged 16-24	15	16	46	8	14	0	93
Aged 25-34	19	22	31	9	18	1	160
Aged 35-44	20	23	36	9	11	1	197
Aged 45-54	14	20	34	11	20	0	207
Aged 55-64	13	15	34	21	17	0	179
Aged 65+	12	20	34	13	21	2	305
Catholic	33	33	27	2	4	0	431
Protestant	3	10	40	19	27	0	602
Single	16	20	39	9	15	0	330
Married / cohabiting	15	20	33	13	18	1	569
Divorced / separated	17	12	43	14	14	0	119
Widowed	12	21	32	13	21	2	123
Disabled	19	19	32	12	18	0	258
Non-disabled	14	20	36	12	17	1	883
Dependants	16	22	34	11	16	0	407
No dependants	15	18	36	13	18	1	734

Source: NI Omnibus Survey 2012

Table 2: How much do you agree that pupils, who wish, should be able to take Irish as a subject at school?

	Agree strongly %	Agree slightly %	Neither agree / disagree %	Disagree slightly %	Disagree strongly %	Don't know / Refusal %	Base
All	39	41	10	4	4	1	1141
Male	38	41	10	4	6	1	525
Female	40	41	11	3	3	1	616
Aged 16-24	42	41	8	6	3	0	93
Aged 25-34	47	34	11	3	4	1	160
Aged 35-44	44	40	9	2	5	1	197
Aged 45-54	36	44	12	3	4	1	207
Aged 55-64	37	45	9	3	5	1	179
Aged 65+	35	41	12	6	4	2	305
Catholic	62	30	6	1	1	0	431
Protestant	23	50	13	6	7	1	602
Single	44	41	8	4	4	0	330
Married / cohabiting	38	41	11	4	4	1	569
Divorced / separated	39	44	10	3	4	0	119
Widowed	29	40	18	5	6	1	123
Disabled	39	43	10	5	2	1	258
Non-disabled	40	41	10	3	5	1	883
Dependants	41	42	10	3	4	0	407
No dependants	39	41	11	4	4	1	734

Source: NI Omnibus Survey 2012

Table 3: How much do you agree that there should be more opportunities for people to learn Irish across Northern Ireland?

	Agree strongly %	Agree slightly %	Neither agree / disagree %	Disagree slightly %	Disagree strongly %	Don't know / Refusal %	Base
All	23	30	26	10	10	1	1141
Male	21	31	24	12	10	1	525
Female	24	29	27	8	10	1	616
Aged 16-24	34	32	23	5	6	0	93
Aged 25-34	34	25	26	8	7	1	160
Aged 35-44	27	33	24	6	8	1	197
Aged 45-54	21	32	28	9	10	0	207
Aged 55-64	13	28	28	19	12	0	179
Aged 65+	15	31	25	12	15	2	305
Catholic	44	34	15	4	2	0	431
Protestant	8	28	34	14	16	1	602
Single	30	34	23	7	7	0	330
Married / cohabiting	20	29	27	12	11	1	569
Divorced / separated	22	36	19	13	9	0	119
Widowed	17	25	29	11	16	2	123
Disabled	24	35	18	10	12	1	258
Non-disabled	22	29	27	10	10	1	883
Dependants	24	29	26	10	10	1	407
No dependants	22	31	25	11	10	1	734

Source: NI Omnibus Survey 2012

Table 4: How much do you agree that the use of Irish should be supported and promoted throughout Northern Ireland?

	Agree strongly %	Agree slightly %	Neither agree / disagree %	Disagree slightly %	Disagree strongly %	Don't know / Refusal %	Base
All	16	26	23	16	19	1	1141
Male	17	23	23	16	21	1	525
Female	15	28	23	16	17	1	616
Aged 16-24	19	31	25	13	11	0	93
Aged 25-34	24	25	24	11	13	3	160
Aged 35-44	18	33	25	9	13	2	197
Aged 45-54	16	25	21	17	21	0	207
Aged 55-64	11	17	24	25	24	0	179
Aged 65+	11	24	21	17	26	2	305
Catholic	35	39	16	7	4	0	431
Protestant	3	15	27	24	30	1	602
Single	18	33	24	12	12	1	330
Married / cohabiting	15	23	21	18	21	1	569
Divorced / separated	16	18	29	18	20	0	119
Widowed	12	24	25	13	24	1	123
Disabled	18	27	18	15	21	1	258
Non-disabled	15	25	24	16	18	1	883
Dependants	18	26	23	16	17	1	407
No dependants	14	25	23	16	20	1	734

Source: NI Omnibus Survey 2012