

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Authority 2013 - 2014 Annual Progress Report  
Section 75 of the NI Act 1998  
Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Order (DDO) 2006



**Habinteg**  
Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd

# EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

## Public Authority 2013 – 2014 Annual Progress Report on:

- Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and
- Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Order (DDO) 2006

### Name of public authority (Enter details below)

Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd

### Equality Officer (Enter name and contact details below)

#### **S75:**

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#### **DDO:**

As Above

## **Part A: Section 75 Annual Progress Report 2013 - 2014**

### **Executive Summary**

**What were the key policy / service developments made by the authority during this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations and what outcomes were achieved?**

#### **Habinteg's response**

For the period 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014, the Association continues to be involved in some key policy and service developments to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations. This includes annual equality training for all relevant staff members.

On 23 & 24 April 2013 the Association arranged Disability Awareness and Etiquette refresher training for all staff through ADAPT. ADAPT is the only voluntary organisation in Northern Ireland, solely committed to "Building Equality and Inclusion through Accessibility". They work vigorously to be the premier provider of accessibility support services which position disability equality as a right.

This refresher training was organised by the Quality and Performance Manager, in adherence to our commitment outlined in our Disability Action Plan, being to 'provide refresher disability awareness training every three years'.

In addition to this the Quality and Performance Manager continues to meet with all new members of staff, as part of their induction to the Association, to talk through the Association's commitment to Equality, in particular the expectations and obligations of the Association and its employees, as outlined in the Association's Equality Scheme.

The Quality and Performance Manager explains that the Equality Scheme serves as a guide to the Association and its employees, helping to guarantee that all individuals are treated equally. This includes ensuring that no person encounters a difficulty in accessing services or working for Habinteg for reasons connected with their age, gender, religion, ethnicity, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, political opinion or caring duties.

No EQIA's were required to be carried out for this reporting period. All customer and staff related policies are screened for equality purposes, prior to Committee and Board approval. [Policies for this reporting period are detailed later in this report].

Customer and staff experience in this area is fed back through satisfaction surveys. In the 2013/2014 Tenant Satisfaction Survey, a 99.6% assessment of performance in the area of equality was recorded.

Although there were fewer new build schemes by the Association for this reporting period, the Association continues to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations by maintaining support to the principles of a 'Shared Future' and 'Shared Neighbourhood', where diversity is welcomed and respect and tolerance are shown to all.

We continue to encourage tenants, as part of their tenancy sign up process, to buy into our Good Neighbour Agreements for all new housing association tenancies and re-lets. We believe it helps to remind tenants that their housing scheme is a shared space; a community.

This involves tenants signing up to a voluntary charter which is a stand-alone document additional to the legal tenancy agreement. It outlines the conduct that is expected from each tenant as well as incorporating community safety. Examples of commitments with specific relevance to the promotion of Good Relations include:

- Respect for all neighbours and their property and fairness in dealing with everyone, irrespective of their religion, race, ability, culture or political belief.
- Recognition that a good community spirit benefits all through healthy interaction and mutual support in dealing with local problems.
- The agreement is talked through in detail with every new tenant and tenants are asked if they would like to enter into this agreement.

In aiming to build these communities, we are helped by our residential members of staff – our Community Assistants who work on a number of our larger housing schemes. As well as working closely with Habinteg's Maintenance Team in identifying and reporting repairs, Community Assistants provide one to one assistance to vulnerable residents and promote community involvement.

Community Assistants [CAs] help to organise activities on our schemes- throughout 2013/14 a range of events took place, including dance and fitness classes, birthday parties, seasonal events, coffee mornings and health and educational classes.

Building Communities also requires healthy resident involvement. A key Business Priority for the Association for the period was a full review of Resident Participation.

A Steering Group was established and an Action Plan was drawn up with the aim of delivery the new strategy by March 2015.

On 23 and 24 April 2013 the Association provided refresher training on Disability Awareness and Etiquette to all staff through ADAPT. ADAPT is the only voluntary organisation in Northern Ireland, solely committed to 'Building Equality and Inclusion through Accessibility'. They work vigorously to be the premier provider of accessibility support services which position disability equality as a right.

The refresher training, organised by the Quality and Performance Manager was received well by staff and is in adherence to our commitment outlined in our Disability Action Plan, being to 'provide refresher disability awareness training every three years'.

In relation to other staff training, the Association continues to invite external agencies that promote equality of opportunity and good relations, into the organisation to provide up to date training and information to all staff. At the Staff Away Day on 23 October 2013, the Association welcomed two speakers along, Dorothy McKee, Occupational Psychologist with an MA in Change management, spoke on engaging everyone on our future success through bringing values to life. The other speaker was Hypnotist and Peak Performance Coach Robert Herdman, who spoke to staff on changing your performance in business by changing the things you are focusing on. Both sessions were well received by staff with positive feedback received through the Staff Away Day evaluation forms.

The Association's Quality and Performance Manager, who spearheads the equality agenda in the organisation with support from the Board, Senior Management Team and the Human Resources Manager, continues to ensure that the Association complies with the latest equality legislation in carrying out their functions, powers and duties and promotes equality of opportunity and good relations among a range of groups.

## **What are the main initiatives planned in the coming year to ensure the authority improves outcomes in terms of equality of opportunity and good relations for individuals from the nine categories covered by Section 75?**

### **Habinteg's response**

The Association remains strongly committed to Equality, by placing it at the heart of its ethos and practice and embedding into everything it does.

As highlighted earlier in this report, equality training and updates continue to be coordinated by the Quality and Performance Manager who actively spearheads and promotes all aspects of equality, as a core element of their role. In general, all aspects of the Association's business continue to adhere to and are inclusive towards all nine categories covered by Section 75.

In the coming year the Association will continue to provide annual up to date equality training on one of the nine category groups with all staff members. All new members of staff will continue to meet with the Quality and Performance Manager, as part of their induction, where our Equality Duty is explained including the Association's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations in all aspects of its work.

From the 23 June to 1 July the Association has arranged for Deaf Awareness training through Action on Hearing Loss. Action on Hearing Loss is the new name for RNID. Their mission is – *'We want a world where hearing loss doesn't limit or label people, where tinnitus is silenced – and where people value and look after their hearing'*.

Action on Hearing Loss' expertise is in providing support for people with hearing loss and tinnitus.

- They provide day-to-day care for people who are deaf and have additional needs.
- They supply communication services and training.
- They offer practical advice to help people protect their hearing.
- They campaign to change public policy around hearing loss issues.
- They support research into an eventual cure for hearing loss and tinnitus.

The Quality and Performance Manager will continue to represent the Association and attend seminars and training organised by the Equality Commission for NI, as standalone training or in conjunction with events and seminars organised with NIFHA, so as to keep up-to-date and aware of any changes in legislation and requirements that the Association must adhere to.

The Quality and Performance Manager will also continue to relay relevant and up to date information both verbally and on the staff Intranet where necessary. Equality work update papers will continue to be prepared for Board, Housing Management Committee and Senior Management Team information at regular intervals throughout the year and listed as an agenda item where required. Discussions will continue to be had at Action Team meetings and any recommendations actioned, upon approval, through staff training and updates. The equality duty also continues to be highlighted at the Residents' Forum and published in the residents' newsletters.

The Association endeavours to continue to take guidance from government, the Equality Commission NI and NIFHA and ensure that it plays its part in helping to improve outcomes for all in terms of equality of opportunity and good relations.

The Association proudly continues to be committed to promoting and delivering its Vision of 'Homes for All' and its mission statement to 'provide accessible, sustainable, high quality housing'.

Habinteg, in general, continues to invest time and resources for internal and external processes while endorsing its Equality Duty under Section 75, through publications and staff training opportunities.

We will continue to ensure that all members of our existing Board and new members to the Board, sub-committees, staff team and Residents' Forum, are made aware of any new duties included in our revised Equality Scheme. As alluded to earlier, we will continue to screen all new and revised policies for equality purposes in accordance with our with our equality duty. We also plan to continue to consult fully with all of our internal groups and external consultees on any new or revised policies that may have an impact on them.

We continue to publicise that we offer any of our publications in alternative formats upon request and have continued to utilise Language Line Services in London and avail of STEP in Dungannon in Northern Ireland who offer interpreting and translation services in various languages, as well as internally having a member of staff who can translate and interpret for our Polish tenants.

We continue to produce documents in large print at the request of some of our customers. The Association will continue to utilise the services of RNIB for the purpose of translating documents into Braille for customers who may request the information using this format.

In addition to the above, we have introduced BrowseAloud Plus to our website, to help website visitors who require online reading support, those with print disabilities, such as dyslexia or mild visual impairments, and those with English as a second language.

We continue to state that ***'The Association is an Equal Opportunity Employer'*** on all of our recruitment and selection material.

The Association is continuing to assess, monitor and generally prepare for the impact of the proposals by the Government in relation to Welfare Reform. This included introducing a Welfare Reform Information Leaflet and implementing a template form that gathers more information from tenant/s at the sign up stage for the purpose of assessing any potential impact of Welfare Reform on individual households.

The Association was reassessed against the Customer Service Excellence Standard on 13 March 2013. We are proud to have retained the standard and were awarded a further compliance plus/best practice, totalling 8 compliance pluses/best practices, 43 full compliances and 6 partial compliances. Following the reassessment the Association immediately drew up an action plan to target the 6 partial compliances. We are confident that we have reduced these to, at most, two partial compliances already, in preparation for our rolling programme Yr 2 reassessment in May 2014.

The new compliance plus was awarded by the Assessor, as described by him, 'due to the depth and width of tenant involvement in policy and decision making'.

In total the compliance pluses/best practices to date include:

1. The Association's general planning for the housing needs of vulnerable people and people with disabilities
2. The introduction of the Tenant Profile Form in response to Welfare Reform and using the opportunity to obtain more up to date information on tenants and their household members.
3. The significant improvements to the Mystery Shopping Exercise Report in 2011 in comparison to the feedback report in 2010.
4. The Equality Question in the Annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey, whereby tenants were asked to feedback if they were treated fairly by the Association across all of the nine Section 75 Equality category groups
5. The introduction of Team Appraisals in the Association and how these were carried out.

6. The strong partnership working in the Association, which was reinforced by partners and other agencies that attended the CSE lunch at Ardnaclowney
7. The Corporate Responsibility Report that details the numerous ways in which Habinteg and its staff contribute to People, Planet and Places in the wider community.
8. The depth and width of tenant involvement in policy and decision making.

As mentioned earlier in this report building communities also requires healthy resident involvement and a key business priority for the Association was a full review of Resident participation.

The main initiative planned for the coming year, following the establishment of a Steering Group and Action Plan, is to deliver on a new Resident Participation strategy by March 2015.

### **New / Revised Equality Schemes**

- Please indicate whether this reporting period applies to a new or revised scheme and (if appropriate) when the scheme was approved?

### **Habinteg's Response:**

For this reporting period the Association refers to our Revised Equality Scheme that was Board approved on 27 June 2012, submitted to NIFHA and the Equality Commission on 1 August 2012 and approved by the Equality Commission on the 28 November 2012. The Scheme – along with an Easy Read Version – serves as a guide, helping to guarantee that the Association treats all individuals equally.

## **Section 1: Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Duties**

- Please outline evidence of progress made in developing and meeting *equality and good relations objectives*, performance indicators and targets in corporate and annual operating plans during 2013-14.

### **Habinteg's Response:**

As previously highlighted in past annual reports, Habinteg continues to have the equality agenda firmly at the heart of the organisation. We do this by continuing to embed our vision of '**Homes for All**', in the delivery of our mission, which is that '**Habinteg provides accessible, sustainable, high quality housing**'. All of our work is driven by our core values, we value Quality, Responsiveness, Commitment, Integrity, Diversity and regard for the Environment. We continue to provide annual progress reports on our equality work to the Equality Commission and NIFHA and are proud to do so.

We recognise the importance of continuing to adhere to our equality duty and timetable and ensure that staff members continue to receive up to date training and information through the role of the Quality and Performance Manager and Human Resources Manager, as highlighted earlier in this report.

Progress on our equality work also continues to be reported on a regular basis by the Quality and Performance Manager to the Board, Housing Management Committee, and Senior Management Team, both verbally and in written report form.

For this reporting period Habinteg Housing Association [Ulster] Ltd was not required to carry out an EQIA on any policies that were screened.

Even without conducting EQIAs for this reporting period, the Association remains committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all and excellence in customer service, and will continue to seek, where possible, to continue to put measures in place to ensure that all sections of society have an equal opportunity to access appropriate redress when problems occur.

Responsibility for overseeing Habinteg's compliance with the Section 75 equality duty will continue to lie with the Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive and the day to day responsibility for developing initiatives in relation to the equality duty continues to be designated to the Quality and Performance Manager, who reports directly to the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Operations and Senior Management Team on this matter.

The Quality and Performance Manager continues to ensure that training and information provided through NIFHA and the ECNI is adopted in order to progress on complying with the equality duty. As mentioned earlier in this report all staff members and other relevant persons are updated on a regular basis through various communication methods, including training events throughout the year.

## **Section 2: Examples of Section 75 Outcomes / Impacts**

Given the renewed focus of Section 75 aiming to achieve more tangible impacts and outcomes and addressing key inequalities; please report in this section how the authority's work has impacted on individuals across the Section 75 categories. Consider narrative in the following structure:

- *Describe* the action measure /section 75 process undertaken.
  - *Who* was affected across the Section 75 categories?
  - *What impact* it achieved?
- Please give examples of changes to policies or practices using **screening or EQIA**, which have resulted in **outcomes or impacts for individuals**. If the change was a result of an EQIA please indicate this and also reference the title of the relevant EQIA.

No EQIA's were completed during 2013-2014.

- Please give examples of **outcomes or impacts on individuals** as a result of any **action measures** undertaken as part of your Section 75 action plan:

Other than those general outcomes and impacts already detailed in the body of this Annual Report and in the next section in relation to consultation and monitoring there are no further outcomes or impacts on particular individuals to report.

- Please give examples of **outcomes or impacts on individuals** as a result of any **other Section 75 processes** e.g. consultation or monitoring:

<b>Category group</b>	<b>Outline change in Policy/ Practice which has resulted in outcomes</b>	<b>Positive Impact</b>
Persons of different Political Opinion	We continue to consult with the full range of Political representatives in relation to new housing developments to engage their support and feedback. We also continue to work with political representatives in interagency community groups in existing neighbourhood schemes.	Community Groups representing communities

Persons of different racial groups	We continue to use translation and interpreting services both in-house and with Language Line in London and STEP in Dungannon	Helps break down language/communication barriers for those customers where English is not their first language
Persons of a different age	We continue to review and remind staff members of our Vulnerable Adults Policy and Child Protection Policy	To ensure staff are aware of appropriate conduct, behaviour and how they should ensure the protection, as far as possible, of our vulnerable adults and children
People with and without a disability	<p>We continue to provide accommodation to meet the needs of disabled groups including, older people, people with physical disabilities and people with learning disabilities. Many of these homes together with support services are provided in partnership with other agencies.</p> <p>We continue to process aids and adaptations where grant funding is made available and continue to adhere to our Vulnerable Adults Policy &amp; Procedures to protect our most vulnerable client groups</p> <p>Installation of enhanced assistive technology in partnership schemes.</p> <p>The introduction of BrowseAloud Plus and translation tools to our website, to help website visitors who require online reading support, those with print disabilities, such as dyslexia or mild visual impairments, and those with English as a second language.</p>	<p>People with disabilities</p> <p>People with disabilities</p> <p>People with disabilities</p> <p>People with disabilities</p> <p>People of different ethnic/racial groups[where English is not their first language]</p>

	<p>We pre-allocate suitable properties to persons on the waiting list where a member of the household has a disability</p> <p>In new build housing we design our homes to Lifetime Homes standards to enable tenants to remain living in that home if their needs and disabilities may change.</p> <p>We continue to promote and support representation of people with disabilities on our Committees and Board.</p>	<p>People with disabilities</p> <p>People with disabilities</p> <p>People with disabilities</p>
<p>People with and without disabilities/ People from different racial, religious and political backgrounds and people with and without dependents.</p>	<p>Our vision remains to provide 'Homes for All' with particular emphasis on integrated housing in terms of ability/disability/ racial/religious/political background and people with and without dependents.</p>	<p>Applicants/Tenants wishing to apply or transfer to one of our housing schemes from a number of the nine category groups.</p>
<p>Persons with and without dependents</p>	<p>We continue to adopt a Career Break Policy for staff members to avail of the opportunity to take a break from their employment for a number of personal reasons, including increased caring responsibilities to be with a spouse who has moved to a different country for employment reasons.</p>	<p>Employees from different genders and marital status, with and without dependents</p>
<p>All nine category groups</p>	<p>The Association continues to be a Equal Opportunity Employer</p>	<p>All applicants wishing to apply for a job with the Association.</p>

### **Section 3: Screening**

- Please provide an update of new / proposed / revised *policies screened* during the year.

For those authorities that have started issuing of screening reports in year; this section may be completed in part by appending, to this annual report, a copy of all screening reports issued within the reporting period.

Where screening reports have not been issued, for part or all of the reporting period, please complete the table below:

<b>Title of policy subject to screening [including screening date]</b>	<b>What was the <i>screening decision</i>? E.g. screened in, screened out, mitigation, EQIA...</b>	<b>Were any <i>concerns raised about screening by consultees</i>; including the Commission?</b>	<b>Is policy being subject to <i>EQIA</i>? Yes/No If yes indicate timeline for assessment.</b>
Retirement Policy [27 January 2014]	Screened out	No	No
Planned Maintenance (Major Works, Cyclical Works and Servicing) Policy [13 January 2014]	Screened out	No	No
Tenant Consultation Policy – Major and Cyclical Works [13 January 2014]	Screened out	No	No
NILGOSC Policy [7 January 2014]	Screened out	No	No
Tenant Fraud Policy [18 December 2013]	Screened out	No	No
Rechargeable Repairs [18 December 2013]	Screened out	No	No
Gifts and Hospitality Policy [1 November 2013]	Screened out	No	No
Maintenance Minor and Miscellaneous Works Policy [16 September 2013]	Screened out	No	No

Selection and Evaluation of Contractors Policy [16 September 2013]	Screened out	No	No
Commissioning and Evaluation of Consultants Policy [16 September 2013]	Screened out	No	No
Development Policy [16 September 2013]	Screened out	No	No
VDU Eyesight Policy [16 September 2013]	Screened out	No	No
Reimbursement of Professional Fees Policy [16 September 2013]	Screened out	No	No
Overtime and Additional Works Policy [16 September 2013]	Screened out	No	No
Eviction Policy [20 August 2013]	Screened out	No	No
Complaints Policy and Procedure [20 August 2013]	Screened out	No	No
Fire Management Policy [24 July 2013]	Screened out	No	No
Risk Assessment for Sheltered Housing Policy and Procedure [22 May 2013]	Screened out	No	No
Major Adaptations Policy [30 May 2013]	Screened out	No	No
Disabled Adaptation Policy: Minor and Major works [20 May 2013]	Screened out	No	No
Fraud Policy Statement and Fraud Response Plan [29 April 2013]	Screened out	No	No

## **Section 4: Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)**

Please provide an update of policies subject to EQIA during 2013-14, stage 7 EQIA monitoring activities and an indicative EQIA timetable for 2014-15.

- EQIA Timetable: April 2013 - March 2014

<b>Title of Policy EQIA</b>	<b>EQIA Stage at end March 2014 (Steps 1-6)</b>	<b>Outline adjustments to policy intended to benefit individuals and the relevant Section 75 categories due to be affected.</b>
There were no EQIA's commenced during this reporting period.		

Where the EQIA timetable for 2013-14 (as detailed in the previous annual S75 progress report to the Commission) has not been met, please provide details of the factors responsible for delay and details of the timetable for re-scheduling the EQIA/s in question.

All Housing Associations are responsible for carrying out EQIA's, as and when these are required with any new or revised policy, adopting the new screening process for all policies. For this reporting period, and as detailed above, there were no policies subject to an EQIA this year.

- Ongoing EQIA Monitoring Activities: April 2013- March 2014

<b>Title of EQIA subject to Stage 7 monitoring</b>	<b>Indicate if differential impacts previously identified have reduced or increased</b>	<b>Indicate if adverse impacts previously identified have reduced or increased</b>
There were no EQIA's commenced during this reporting period.		

Please outline any proposals, arising from the authority's monitoring for adverse impacts, for revision of the policy to achieve better outcomes the relevant equality groups:

## 2014-15 EQIA Timetable

<b>Title of EQIAs due to be commenced during April 2014 – March 2015</b>	<b>Revised or New policy?</b>	<b>Please indicate expected timescale of Decision Making stage i.e. Stage 6</b>
All Housing Associations have been responsible for carrying out EQIA's, as and when these are required with any new or revised policy, adopting the new screening process for all policies. For this reporting period no EQIA's were required.		

## **Section 5: Training**

- Please outline training provision during the year associated with the Section 75 Duties / Equality Scheme requirements including types of training provision and conclusions from any training evaluations.

### **Habinteg's Response:**

The Association's Quality and Performance Manager, continues to actively embrace the equality agenda on behalf of the organisation by availing of relevant external training and information seminars provided by NIFHA and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and other relevant voluntary and statutory bodies throughout the year.

In 2013-14 NIFHA arranged a variety of open courses and workshops for members, a number of which were aimed at helping them to meet their equality obligations. The training events covered a range of topics including practical sessions on Welfare Reform and a conference on Care and Support. Among other issues the latter event highlighted growing concerns about attitudes to people with disabilities and the negative impact this can have on delivering much-needed housing provision.

As mentioned earlier in this report all relevant equality training and updates on Section 75 equality duties were reported by the Quality and Performance Manager to the Board, the Housing Management Committee, the Senior Management Team, the Action Team and to staff members at weekly team meetings and at various stages throughout the year, including through the Intranet and at the annual Habinteg Away Day when all staff and some Board members are present.

As mentioned earlier the Association continues to place a strong emphasis on the Equality Duty to its employees from day one of their employment with the Association. This involves the Quality and Performance Manager providing each new employee with a one to one session on the Association's commitment to the equality agenda as part of their induction to the organisation.

The Association, as a long standing 'Investors in People' organisation, continues to welcome the opportunity to train staff to enhance their ability to do their job better. Training to enable staff to fulfil the Section 75 duty is considered essential.

Individual training continues to be identified at the appraisal stage between the Line Manager and the appraisee. At weekly team meetings training continues to be reviewed with the rest of the team and an evaluation form on the training completed by the member of staff who attended the training.

<b>Training</b>	<b>No. of staff attended</b>	<b>Training facilitator</b>	<b>S75 Group applicable to</b>	<b>Training Evaluation Summary</b>
Disability Awareness & Etiquette Training [3 yearly refresher training]	All frontline staff	ADAPT	Persons with disabilities	Received well by staff
Fraud Training	All staff	In-house	All groups	Essential training for all staff
Challenging behaviour and lone working training	All relevant staff	CIH [Jack Moore]	All groups	Received well by staff
Bringing Values to life	All staff [Staff Away Day]	Dorothy McKee	All groups	Received well by staff
Change your performance in business by changing the things you are focusing on	All staff [Staff Away Day]	Robert Herdman	All groups	Received well by staff
Equality Focus	Quality and Performance Manager	NIFHA	All groups	Beneficial training
Equality Review Meetings	Quality and Performance Manager	IN House with Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Operations	All groups	Keeping up to date on changes in legislation and/or recommended practice. Discussion of the screening of new/revised policies.

## **Section 6: Communication**

- Please outline how the authority communicated progress on delivery of the Section 75 Duties during the year and evidence of the impact / success of such activities.

### **Habinteg's Response:**

As with this report, the Association continues to complete and submit an annual progress report to the Equality Commission, provides a copy to NIFHA and uploads a copy on to its website, highlighting its equality work since the last reporting period.

Internally the Association continues to evaluate feedback from staff members on the various equality training provided. This feedback also helps decide on future training needs.

For this reporting period the Association is delighted to report on the redevelopment and launch of its new more accessible and customer friendly website, which took place on 20 January 2014.

As part of this the Equality Matters section of the website was also redeveloped with the amount of information being increased and being made more readily available in this section of the website. This includes clear sub menus to access our;

1. Equality Scheme [including an Easy Read Version],
2. Equality Policy Screening,
3. EQIA Reports and
4. Annual Reports to the Equality Commission [ECNI] sections.

The Association continues to survey 20% of its tenants on an annual basis to assess satisfaction. One particular survey question, as mentioned earlier in this report, asks tenants to express how they felt they were treated by the member/s of staff they were in contact with and whether they felt they were treated unfairly. Feedback from tenants continues to show very high satisfaction with staff treating tenants fairly.

Habinteg also continues to communicate progress on its delivery of the Section 75 duties during the year in a number of other ways. These include in the Residents' Newsletter, directly to the Residents' Forum, in its Annual 'How Did We Do' document, on the staff Intranet and at staff training events.

## **Section 7: Data Collection & Analysis**

- Please outline any systems that were established during the year to supplement available statistical and qualitative research or any research undertaken / commissioned to obtain information on the needs and experiences of individuals from the nine categories covered by Section 75, including the needs and experiences of people with multiple identities.

### **Habinteg's Response:**

The following were used in considering available data relevant to the services provided by Habinteg:-

- Internal management information on the profile of tenants and service users
- 2011 Northern Ireland Census Data
- Office for National Statistics
- Northern Ireland Research and Statistics Agency
- Housing Waiting list data from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Various Tenant Satisfaction Survey Results
- Complaints register and complaints feedback.
- Equality Commission Codes of Practice
- Flexible working requests from staff
- Completed Comprehensive Service Reviews
- Neighbour Nuisance and anti social behaviour reports and statistics
- Rent Arrears (current tenants)
- Rent Arrears (past tenants)
- Recruitment and Selection statistics and evaluation
- Voids and Allocations statistics and feedback
- Independently commissioned statistics and research [Mystery Shopping]
- Staff Survey

Other regular data collection audits continue to be undertaken internally. Some of these include;

- The collection of tenant data, on behalf of NIFHA, for their annual socio-economic data analysis of new lettings. These statistics are referred to as 'NICORE' [Northern Ireland Continuous Omnibus Recording] – statistics of all lettings made by the Association and at 31 March 2014 still cover seven of the nine Section 75 categories.

For this reporting period the re-let and new let tenant data for Habinteg are displayed in the tables on the next page:

## 2013/14 FIGURES

		Frequency	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Older single person	19	9.4	9.4
	Older couple	6	3.0	12.4
	Single adult	53	26.2	38.6
	Couple	2	1.0	39.6
	Single parent	84	41.6	81.2
	Couple w. children	28	13.9	95.0
	Multi-Adult	10	5.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

- 56% of lettings were to 'family' households compared to 59% in 12/13
- 26% were to single , same as in 12/13
- 12% were to 'older' households, compared to 9% in 12/13

		Frequency	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Male	93	46.0	46.0
	Female	109	54.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

- Compared to 12/13 the proportion of male Heads of Household increased from 35% to 46%

		Frequency	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	White	194	96.0	96.0
	Indian	1	0.5	96.5
	Bangladeshi	1	0.5	97.0
	Black Caribbean	1	0.5	97.5
	Black African	1	0.5	98.0
	Mixed	2	1.0	99.0
	Other	2	1.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

<b>Table 1.8 Community to which household belongs</b>				
		Frequency	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Protestant	35	17.6	17.6
	Catholic	138	69.3	86.9
	Mixed	1	0.5	87.4
	No religious belief	13	6.5	94.0
	Other not stated	12	6.0	100.0
	Not disclosed	3	1.5	
	Total	202	100.0	

<b>Table 1.9 Marital status of head of household</b>				
		Frequency	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Unmarried	117	57.9	57.9
	Married	31	15.3	73.3
	Divorced	21	10.4	86.1
	Separated	26	12.9	86.5
	Widowed	7	3.5	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	

<b>Table 1.10 Age of head of household</b>				
		Frequency	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	18-24	24	11.9	11.9
	25-44	116	57.4	69.3
	45-59	35	17.3	86.6
	60 plus	27	13.4	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	

- Compared to the previous year the proportion of 18-24 year olds who were Heads of Households decreased from 21% to 12%, whilst the proportion of 25-44 year olds who were Heads of Households increased from 51% to 57%

<b>Table 1.11 New households where head of household has a disability</b>				
		Frequency	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Head of Household Has A Disability	66	32.7	32.7
	Head of Household Has No Disability	136	67.3	100.0
	Total	202	100.0	

The Association also continues to collect and report similar information to NIFHA on behalf of its jointly managed schemes. Please see the category breakdown detailed overleaf:

<b>Table 3.6 Ethnic composition of household</b>				
		Frequency	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	White	11	91.7	91.7
	Irish Traveller	1	8.3	100.0
	Total	12	100.0	

<b>Table 3.7 Community to which household belongs</b>				
		Frequency	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Protestant	2	16.7	16.7
	Catholic	9	75.0	91.7
	No religious belief	1	8.3	100.0
	Total	12	100.0	

<b>Table 3.8 Marital status of head of household</b>				
		Frequency	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Unmarried	7	58.3	58.3
	Divorced	3	25.0	83.3
	Separated	2	16.7	100.0
	Total	12	100.0	

<b>Table 3.9 Age of head of household</b>				
		Frequency	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	18-24	0		
	25-44	9	75.0	75.0
	45-59	3	25.0	100.0
	60 plus	0		
	Total	12	100.0	

<b>Table 3.10 new households where head of household has a disability</b>				
		Frequency	Valid &	Cumulative &
Valid	Head of Household Has A Disability	1	8.3	8.3
	Head of Household Has No Disability	11	91.7	100.0
	Total	12	100.0	

Habinteg continues to produce similar information in the form of annual returns on its activities in relation to Housing Management to our funding body the Department for Social Development [DSD].

The Association also continues to conduct annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey across 20% of all our housing schemes and continues to adopt the Tenant Satisfaction Survey template used by a number of other housing associations for benchmarking purposes. For this reporting period a summary of the results were published in Habinteg's 'How Did We Do?' document 2013, which is distributed to all residents and is made available on our website.

The results of the surveys continue to be analysed by the Quality and Performance Manager and are then discussed in detail at the Housing Management Committee meetings and are reported on at Senior Management Team and Board meetings. The next 20% round of surveys for 2014 will commence in November 2014, using the same benchmarking Tenant Satisfaction Survey.

The results of the surveys are also communicated to all other staff members at weekly team meetings and on the staff Intranet and actions are put in place to address where possible any improvements in service delivery.

The Association continues to have in place a staff suggestion scheme in which staff members are encouraged to put forward thoughts and suggestions on how to improve on the Association's service delivery especially to those who fall under any one of the nine categories outlined under Section 75 of the Statutory Equality Duty. Suggestions for service improvement can also be talked through with staff members Line Managers at their 6 monthly appraisals.

The Association continues to complete the Tenant Profile form, introduced in September 2011, at sign up stage, which allows the Association to gather information on its tenants', including their household compositions, needs and preferences.

The main purpose of this exercise continues to be to identify tenants that are likely to be impacted by Welfare Reform. This allows the Association to continue to target advice and support and be prepared for the impact in terms of time and resources, if and when the reforms come to fruition. This will be an ongoing priority exercise the Association will be working through.

- Please outline any use of the Commission’s Section 75 Monitoring Guide.

The Association generally continues to refer to the guide in the process of developing or implementing policy to ensure that we are promoting equality of opportunity and good relations and are adhering to the responsibilities imposed by Section 75. The Association used the guidance when revising its recruitment monitoring for and used the template recommended in the guide.

## **Section 8: Information Provision, Access to Information and Services**

- Please provide details of any initiatives / steps taken during the year, including take up, to improve access to services; including provision of information in accessible formats.

### **Habinteg's Response:**

Since the last reporting period we are proud to publish that the Association has fully redeveloped and re-launched the its website, in consultation with staff and the Residents Forum,.

The overhaul was completed by the Association's Communication Officer in conduction with web design company 31 Interactive. The Main changes have been the increased information provision, better functionality and generally being more user-friendly. This has included the enhancement and refreshment of more relevant, accessible and up to date information and publications for customers in a variety of accessible formats.

We also continue to state on all of our publications that all our information can be made available in alternative formats upon request. We continue to use the facilities of Language Line Services, who provide interpretation and translation services in up to 170 various languages and the language translation services of local company STEP.

Our reception areas continue to display welcome posters in a variety of languages for people from a wide range of cultures visiting our offices.

We continue to specifically ask in our Annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey where we could improve our information provision and where weaknesses are identified we address these as soon as possible. The benchmarking Tenant Satisfaction Survey allows us to benchmark our tenant satisfaction levels against of tenants in similar sized housing associations.

## **Section 9: Complaints**

- Please identify the number of Section 75 related complaints:
  - received and resolved by the authority (including how this was achieved);
  - which were not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant;
  - which were referred to the Equality Commission.

### **Habinteg's Response:**

- No Section 75 complaints were received during the period 2013/2014.
- A comprehensive complaints procedure remains in place which offers recourse to the Ombudsman Service.

## **Section 10: Consultation and Engagement**

- Please provide details of the measures taken to enhance the level of engagement with *individuals* and representative groups during the year.
- Please outline any use of the Commission's guidance on consulting with and involving children and young people.

### **Habinteg's Response:**

The Association continues to be committed to working closely with our Joint Management Partners, other housing associations, NIFHA, the Equality Commission, our Residents Forum and community and voluntary groups to undertake consultation and involvement exercises in relation to the Section 75 duty.

Habinteg remains strongly committed to consultation generally and views consultation and involvement of customers as a key business priority.

This is particularly evident in the work that is carried out by a representative Residents' Forum, which continues to maintain democratically elected representatives from Habinteg housing schemes and meets at least three times per year.

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Residents' Forum are also co-opted members of the Housing Management Committee and the Chairman is also a member of the Board.

The Association also continues to work very closely with many groups and consortia throughout the community and voluntary sectors. Such mechanisms continue to prove excellent vehicles for the Association to gain an insight into the requirements of different groups in the community.

A number of events are ongoing and have taken place. One significant event that continues to be rolled out across a number of Habinteg housing schemes and with staff members included;

**Health Checks and Health Awareness** – facilitated by one of Habinteg's Community Assistants Margaret Cunningham. The Health checks and awareness training continues to be provided by Margaret Cunningham.

The sessions have included taking and monitoring residents' blood pressure and weight, providing health information, particularly in relation to healthy living and raising awareness of cancer, such as early prevention and knowing what

symptoms to look for, along with sign posting and offering specific support and services in the area.

The Association continues to support a staff nominated charity, and has excelled in fundraising in the last number of years through dress down days, coffee morning, charity lunches, quizzes, parachute jobs to name a few.

The Association's Development Team continue to engage with schools, community groups, locally elected representatives and individual stakeholders in the area where they are delivering housing solutions.

The Association's residential members of staff are also engaging with the residents in their schemes by organising more scheme events including coffee mornings and big lunches.

Our North-West office staff are also involved in a Schools project, where ASB is discussed with children. The need to respect all their neighbours is promoted with the aim of encouraging good relations in their communities.

## **Section 11: The Good Relations Duty**

- Please provide details of additional steps taken to implement or progress the good relations duty during the year. Please indicate any findings or expected outcomes from this work.

### **Habinteg's Response:**

In addition to the evidence detailed in the report, the Association does take additional steps to promote and foster good relations.

The Association remains committed to Corporate Responsibility and recognises the benefits for customers, employees and key stakeholders in developing and implementing a Corporate Responsibility Strategy.

The Association continues to have a clear ambitious vision to consider the economic, social and environmental impact of its operations, it is involved in a number of activities which promote good relations within the communities and wider society in which it operates. These are explained in more detail in our CR Annual Report which is available on our website.

Our staff participate in a number of groups which promote community safety and a better quality of life for local people. For example:

#### **Shantallow North Community Forum**

The aim of this group is to find ways to improve community safety and enhance the quality of life of residents in the Shantallow North area. The Forum was formed by local people, who were interested in creating a safe environment that meets social needs and generates a sense of belonging and pride within the local community.

#### **Foyle Community Forums Partnership Group**

The aim of this umbrella group are to advance community safety and to improve the conditions of life of residents in the Derry City Council area by providing information and practical assistance for the benefit of residents with a view to creating a safe environment , which meets social needs and generates a sense of belonging and pride within local communities.

#### **Outer North Community Safety Team**

The aim of this group is to resolve community safety issues at ground level in the Outer North area of the city.

## **The Habinteg Estates Forum**

Aim of this group is to combat anti social behaviour within our estates in the Hazelbank area. This Forum comprises Habinteg Housing officers in the Northwest and the PSNI.

## **Colin Neighbourhood Partnership**

This group of Housing providers meets with the PSNI to find ways to deal with Anti-Social Behaviour and to promote a better sense of community. There is a residents' scrutiny panel which monitors the social landlords' responses to reports of ASB.

These local groups encourage good relations within communities and also help to make sure incidents of ASB are dealt with in a timely way according to policies and procedures.

Our North-West office staff are also involved in a Schools project in conjunction with the Housing Executive and PSNI, where ASB is discussed with children. The need to respect all their neighbours is promoted with the aim of encouraging good relations in their communities.

The Association continues to promote mediation as a method of resolving neighbour disputes. This promotes good relations and avoids the need for costly legal action. Front line staff have received training in dealing with difficult customers with the aim of diffusing confrontational situations. We hope to resolve disputes by discussion and negotiation.

As mentioned earlier in this report the Association continues to promote 'Shared Future Neighbourhoods' like that of its development at Ballyfatton Close, Sion Mills, Co. Tyrone.

The Association supports these activities by continuing to promote the principles of 'A Shared Future' and 'Neighbourhood Charter'. Residents are encouraged to affirm their choice to live in a 'Shared Future Neighbourhood' by signing up to a 'Neighbourhood Charter' in which diversity is welcomed and respect and tolerance are shown to all, irrespective of religious, political or cultural beliefs.

As highlighted in the Executive Summary of this report, the Association has continued to promote its 'Good Neighbour Agreement' whereby Habinteg residents are encouraged to sign up to a voluntary charter which is a stand-alone document additional to the legal tenancy agreement. It outlines the

conduct that is expected from each tenant as well as incorporating community safety and shared neighbourhood principles. Examples of commitments with specific relevance to the promotion of Good Relations include:

Respect for all neighbours and their property and fairness in dealing with everyone, irrespective of their religion, race, ability, culture or political belief.

Recognition that a good community spirit benefits all through healthy interaction and mutual support in dealing with local problems.

Generally the Association fully supports the Good Relations Duty in any way it can.

- Please outline any use of the Commission's Good Relations Guide.

While no specific parts of the guide that can reference our work against, the Association continues to generally refer to the guide in the process of developing or implementing policy, again to ensure that we are promoting equality of opportunity and good relations and are adhering to the responsibilities imposed by Section 75.

## **Section 12: Additional Comments**

- Please provide any additional information/comments.

Although highlighted in previous Annual Reports to the Commission, it is important to re-emphasise that 'Habinteg' is derived from an amalgamation of the words 'habitat' and 'integrate'. The association prides itself on continuing to be the leading provider of accommodation for people with disabilities on schemes where wheelchair dwellings are integrated with those of able-bodied persons in Northern Ireland;

Likewise, we continue to provide accommodation for older people and families throughout Northern Ireland;

All of our offices are wheelchair accessible and therefore pushchair accessible and our two main offices in Holywood and Londonderry are equipped with a lift.

Also mentioned earlier in this report, is Habinteg's collaborative working with other housing associations and NIFHA. This work will continue to help mainstream equality and promote good relations in the social housing sector and beyond in Northern Ireland.

Externally, Quality and Equality performance is also measured against national standards, such as Customer Service Excellence and Investors in People. For this reporting period, in March 2013, Habinteg retained the Customer Service Excellence Standard, with a further best practice/compliance plus to make it a total of 8 Compliance Pluses/Best Practices, which the Association is very proud of, but will not become complacent in maintaining.

The Association is also proud to remain an Investor in People organisation with Bronze Status following reassessment to the status in April 2012.

A full account of any other achievements for this reporting period can be accessed through Habinteg's overall Annual Report which can be accessed [here](#) or on our website.

**Part B: 'Disability Duties'**  
**Annual Report 1 April 2013 / 31 March 2014**

**1. How many action measures for this reporting period have been**

14

Fully  
Achieved?

Partially  
Achieved?

Not  
Achieved?

**2. Please outline the following detail on all actions that have been fully achieved in the reporting period.**

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs <sup>1</sup>	Outcomes / Impact <sup>2</sup>
National <sup>3</sup>	NIFHA / Members	Participation in relevant consultation exercises.	Inform policies / strategies and promote equality.
Regional <sup>4</sup>	One of Habinteg's residents, who is also Chair of Habinteg's Residents Forum, continues to be an advocate of Disability Awareness. This person also continues to be a Housing Management Committee member and has previously sat on one of the Association's Service Review Panels. The Association also has a Board Member, who is a wheelchair user, who has sat on the Board and Housing Management Committee for a number of years	Both members have an extremely important role in the organisation and their input and role in the organisation demonstrate how the association encourages and welcomes people with disabilities to help make a positive impact on public life at a local level.	Ensures that Disability awareness and positive promotion remains imperative to the Association's vision and ethos
Local <sup>5</sup>	NIFHA / Members	Participation in relevant consultation exercises.	Inform policies / strategies and promote equality.

<sup>1</sup> **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.

<sup>2</sup> **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.

<sup>3</sup> **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments

<sup>4</sup> **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

<sup>5</sup> **Local** : Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora.

2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Regular in-house Equality Training over the year provided by internal and external trainers as well as all new staff, as part of their induction, meet with the Quality and Performance Manager one to one to highlight and embed the Association's equality duties.	Training provided internally for all staff on Section 75 equality duties and promotion of the Habinteg's integrated approach and externally training on Traveller Awareness Training. For this reporting period 11 new staff members joined the Association and received equality training as part of their induction	Awareness of current legislation and statutory duties on organisation and individual staff members as well as an awareness and understanding of appropriate language and behaviour from induction stage in the Association.
2	Liaising between the Association and NIFHA through the Association's Quality and Performance Manager and NIFHA, particularly through equality updates and through joint working with NIFHA and other Housing Associations	Updates and joint working activities filtered through from Board to staff members	Awareness and equality agenda continuing to be embedded in the corporate strategy and actively promoted in the organisation as a whole.
3	Quality and Performance Manager continuing to spearhead the equality agenda and ensure the Association is up to date with the latest initiatives and obligations expected of it.	Quality and Performance Manager to relay this information through continued training of staff members and liaising with the appropriate bodies to provide external support and awareness	Awareness and equality agenda continuing to be embedded in the corporate strategy and actively promoted in the organisation as a whole.
4	Regular in-house Equality Training over the year provided by internal and external trainers as well as all new staff, as part of their induction, meet with the Quality and Performance Manager one to one to highlight and embed the Association's equality duties.	Training provided internally for all staff on Section 75 equality duties and promotion of the Habinteg's integrated approach and externally training on Respect and Dignity. For this reporting period 11 new staff members joined the Association and received equality training as part of their induction	Awareness of current legislation and statutory duties on organisation and individual staff members as well as an awareness and understanding of appropriate language and behaviour from induction stage in the Association.

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	The Association continues to subscribe to Language Line Services to provide translation and interpretation services in over 170 various languages. The Association also continues to utilise the services of local firm STEP for translating documents in different languages. The Association continues to provide information on its website that can be translated into various preferred languages there and then.	Interpretation and translation services remain an important facility to encourage equal accessibility of information to all who wish to use our services. An easy read version of the Association's Equality Scheme was produced.	Customers who have used the facility have been able to access information in their preferred language/format.
2	The Association continues to promote a statement that information can be provided in Alternative Formats including Braille and other different languages as mentioned above. The introduction of our new more accessible and user friendly website, including the introduction of BrowseAloud.	Equal accessibility of information to all who wish to use our services	Customers who have used the facility have been able to access information in their preferred format
3	As mentioned earlier the website, the Tenants Handbook, the Residents Newsletter and Staff Intranet continue to be updated and improved on involving Resident Forum consultation	More relevant and accessible information is provided that is of interest to residents	Established a staff Intranet to improve on internal communication. Continuing to carry out further work on our website through continued consultation with Residents Forum, including providing more information and increasing accessibility.
4	The continued representation of Disability advocates on the Housing Management Committee and Board	Has a stronger voice and position to promote equality to Senior Management and Board of Management and subsequently at decision making level	The Association benefits from the experience of champions of Disability Rights being members of the Housing Management Committee and Board. With this insight and voice this will help positively impact on any decision making processes.

2 (d) What action measures were achieved to ‘**encourage others**’ to promote the two duties:

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Continue to embed the disability duties into our consultation with customers processes through our Residents Forum and tenant survey structures	Creating an awareness of our obligations of the disability duties internally to our staff and Board and externally to our customers, whilst promoting positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and encouraging participation by people with disabilities in public life.	Ongoing commitment to promote the two duties and encourage others to see that this is good practice
2	Include regular features about disability in Residents Newsletters	“	Ongoing commitment to promote the two duties and encourage others to see that this is good practice
3	Positive images of people with disabilities in our Habinteg literature, staff and Board structure, correspondence and other promotional materials	“	Ongoing commitment to promote the two duties and encourage others to see that this is good practice
4	Promote the awareness of our duties under the Disability Discrimination Order as part of induction and training programme for Board members and staff	“	Ongoing commitment to promote the two duties and encourage others to see that this is good practice

2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1	N/A		
2			
3			

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones <sup>6</sup> / Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	N/A			
2				
3				
4				

<sup>6</sup> **Milestones** – Please outline what part progress has been made towards the particular measures; even if full output or outcomes/ impact have not been achieved.

4. Please outline what **action measures have not been achieved** and the reasons why?

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	N/A	
2		
3		

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

The Association continues to be committed to the effective implementation of all aspects of the Disability Action Plan throughout our organisation. Overall responsibility for the determining the policy on how effective implementation is achieved will be determined by our Board, led by the Chairman. The Chief Executive will continue to provide direction and guidance to both the Board and staff team with the assistance of the Quality and Performance Manager who will continue to have day-to-day responsibility for implementation of the policy relating to this area. The Quality and Performance Manager will report to Senior Managers on a regular basis. Senior Managers will have ultimate responsibility for overseeing and implementing administrative arrangements to ensure that the Association complies with its Disability Duties. Evaluation forms are distributed to all staff to complete following all internal training. Feedback from the evaluation forms help to determine future training needs and requirements in these areas.

(b) Quantitative

Integral to Habinteg’s business planning process is the annual review of our Vision, Mission Statement Objectives and Values by Senior Managers. Continuing to adopt the Operational Plan approach, the Association continues to set ‘SMART’ objectives and KPIs, including target setting and monitoring using

the Balanced Scorecard business improvement tool also forms a key element of our business planning process. This is reflected at all levels of the strategic planning process. How targets are met and objectives are delivered is monitored and reported at the most senior level in the organisation. The progress on the Disability Action Plan will be monitored and reported on through the Senior Management Team, Sub-Committees and ultimately to the Board.

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

Please delete: **No** If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation’s annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

While no further changes are planned to date the Association will continue to look at how we could further improve on the outcomes of our Disability Plan and will continue to adhere to DDA legislation and the guidance of relevant agencies and other bodies in this area.





# Housing Associations' Joint Equality Exercise

## Annual Progress Report 2013-14

### Introduction

The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) is the trade body for 25 registered and four non-registered housing associations in N Ireland. NIFHA itself is *not* a designated body, but we support member associations in their implementation of the Statutory Equality Duties. In doing so we help members maximise their resources, while reducing the impact on consultee and/or stakeholder bodies. In recent years the total number of registered housing associations has been reducing through merger. This trend continued in 2013-14, details of these changes will be recorded in the reports of the individual associations.

This collaborative activity is facilitated by NIFHA's Corporate Services Manager and steered by the Federation's Business Committee. However, responsibility for fulfilling the Statutory Duties *remains* with each designated housing association; NIFHA's role is purely supportive. The following sections outline the collective work carried out with or on behalf of members.

### General

NIFHA's regular support to member associations during 2013-14 is summarised below:

- Reporting on equality matters and progress of the joint project at three Federation Business Committee and four Resources and Standards Committee meetings
- Co-ordinating meetings and relevant working / task groups
- Producing equality-specific briefings for members as well as issuing prompts for action and providing updates on equality and diversity matters in NIFHA's e-News
- Organising or signposting to training relevant to the associations' equality work
- Centrally collating and distributing statistical information and consultee feedback
- Managing, maintaining and sharing a Joint Consultee List
- Facilitating and managing relevant joint consultation exercises or events as necessary
- Capturing and reflecting the views of members when responding to equality-related consultations undertaken by other organisations
- Liaising with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI)
- Acting as a liaison point for organisations representing Section 75 groups
- Acting as a contact point for all designated associations
- Routinely providing information, advice and support to assist designated associations in fulfilling their statutory duties or in addressing equality matters

## **EQIA Process**

The designated housing associations original Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) programme came to an end in 2011. No additional impact assessments had been identified for joint action in 2013-14 as this work has been mainstreamed by member associations. However, should the need arise for a EQIA which has sector-wide relevance NIFHA would continue to act as a facilitator for joint work.

## **Training**

In 2013-14 NIFHA again arranged a variety of open courses and workshops for members in response to identified training needs, we also sign-posted individuals or organisations to relevant training and events.

Our training covered a range of topics including practical sessions on Welfare Reform and a conference on Care and Support. Among other issues the latter event highlighted members' growing concerns about attitudes to people with disabilities and the negative impact this can have on delivering much-needed housing provision. (See comments.)

## **Communications <sup>7</sup>**

Throughout 2013-14 NIFHA's Corporate Services Manager maintained her role as a liaison between the Equality Commission and housing associations. The Federation was the main link between members and those with an interest in promoting equality of opportunity, e.g. consultee organisations, voluntary groups or statutory bodies.

Moreover, the NIFHA team answered queries, provided general information about associations and co-ordinated any general engagement aspects of the joint project. Where appropriate, NIFHA also used its events, publications and website ([www.nifha.org](http://www.nifha.org)) to showcase the work members have undertaken to implement equality of opportunity and promote good relations.

Federation staff actively participate in the events of other organisations, using such occasions to promote the positive contribution housing associations make for our community beyond the actual provision of homes, including on equality and diversity matters. The following are examples from 2013-14:

- Corporate Services Manager - participation in NIHE Equality Consultative Forum meetings
- Deputy Chief Executive / Housing Policy & Research Manager - regular participation in NIHE Research Committee
- Housing Policy & Research Manager - ongoing participation in Joint Housing Adaptations Group

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<sup>7</sup> Reported NIFHA communications output only relates to the joint aspects of our members' work and is intended to complement each individual association's messages about their respective equality and good relations activities.

- Housing Policy & Research Manager - regular contribution to work of Voluntary Sector Housing Policy Forum
- Policy and Communications Officer - Assisted with Ark Housing's Annual Neighbourhood Day which has a multi-cultural focus

NIFHA was also continued to be a key participant in the 'Digital Age Partnership' which was launched in 2012. This multi-agency project<sup>8</sup> is a four year scheme funded by the Big Lottery to address digital exclusion experienced by older people living in sheltered housing. The two key elements of the project are training in the use of IT for tenants of sheltered accommodation aged 60 plus and inter-generational projects between each participating scheme and local schools.

By April 2014 over 200 tenants across 52 sheltered schemes belonging to seven housing associations had benefited from this training. The project provided:

- IT equipment;
- training materials; and,
- a tutor to work directly with residents.

Residents of around 10 housing schemes also participated in intergenerational projects involving local schools or youth groups.

### **Data Collection & Analysis**

Our **N**orthern **I**reland **C**ontinuous **R**ecording (NICORE) database of new lettings records and analyses the socio-economic characteristics of new housing association tenants in relation to the size and rent level of their new homes. New tenants provide information on the composition and socio-economic circumstances of their households; while housing associations add data on the property to be rented and the reason for housing the new tenant. NIFHA is responsible for co-ordinating the survey, inputting the data onto a computerised data-base and providing periodic reports to housing associations.

NICORE enables associations to systematically record key data about the people they house and to have access to customer profile information. By carrying out this work on behalf of the sector NIFHA is able to make strategic use of the NICORE results at the local and national level, strengthening the role of associations in addressing housing need and helping to identify emerging trends.

During 2013-14 the main information gathering activities co-ordinated or undertaken by NIFHA under the joint exercise were:

- Production of reports from the Federation's NICORE Database
- Use of NIFHA's database to provide equality data for member associations

NIFHA also produced 10 general reports for individual housing associations within this reporting period.

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<sup>8</sup> The five partners are: WEA (lead agency), AVEC solutions, Beth Johnston Foundation – Linking Generations, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), and NIFHA.

## **Information Provision; Access to Information and Services**

NIFHA itself is not designated under Section 75 but the Federation has maintained its commitment to producing information and publications in formats that use accessible fonts and type styles. NIFHA also strives to ensure that information provided on [www.nifha.org](http://www.nifha.org) is accessible and takes a positive approach to requests for production of materials in alternative formats.

NIFHA routinely provides information and advice for housing associations on translation, interpretation services or producing material in alternative formats. We automatically share any information received on suppliers of such services. These mailings are aimed at equipping members to react promptly to any requests where accessibility may be a factor. We also respond to specific queries from member associations / sign-post them to service providers. Implementation remains the responsibility of the association.

## **Consultation and Engagement**

Where appropriate NIFHA continued our general consultation and engagement activities as part of our member support work for the associations' Joint Equality Project, such as:

- Conducting routine exercises to ensure that the joint consultee list remains accurate, up-to-date and valid
- Amending the consultee list following individual notification of changes and / or on discovery of invalid details relating to consultee data
- Participating in a range of inter-agency groups which enable engagement with 'equalities' organisations – this is in addition to our electronic networking or consultation with relevant groups

NIFHA also consulted with member associations using their feedback to inform detailed written responses on consultation exercises by other organisations which are of particular importance to our client group.

The following consultations<sup>9</sup> were relevant during 2013-14:

- DFP - Welfare Reform Rate Rebate Replacement Arrangements
- DSD - Discretionary Support Policy
- DSD & DHSSPS - Inter-Departmental Review of Housing Adaptations Services
- NIHE & DSD - Supporting People - Housing Related Support Strategy
- NIHE - Equality Impact Assessment: Proposed Changes to the Housing Selection Scheme
- DETINI - Financial Capability Strategy

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<sup>9</sup> All such response documents are available at [www.nifha.org](http://www.nifha.org)

- DFP - Rebate Replacement Arrangements: The Way Forward

### **Good Relations Duty**

Throughout the reporting period NIFHA continued to be an advocate of mainstream funding and consistent support for a 'Shared Future' housing programme. We undertake our commitment to promoting good relations in our role as an umbrella organisation while our members responsible for implementing it in the community through their housing programmes. Where relevant, the individual associations will provide details of Shared Future schemes which they developed during 2013-14 in their respective Annual Progress Reports.

NIFHA continued to be involved with various inter-agency groups working to foster good relations. Initiating and sustaining such strategic alliances is integral to our work on behalf of our membership. Such active participation allows us to offer useful assistance and share best practice with associations which can enhance our members' approach to the good relations duty. It also creates opportunities to highlight the many excellent contributions of housing associations in this important area of work.

For example, in April 2013 we hosted an event with, Mike Penning MP, the Minister of State for Northern Ireland which considered cross-community work and how housing providers can work to address the challenge of fostering good relations. Connswater Homes and St Matthews Housing Association contributed to the study visits, while Tony Kennedy, the Chair of Ulidia Housing shared his experience of issues affecting community cohesion.

### **Disability Duties**

Responsibility for implementation of the Disability Duties lies with the individual association. Their respective Actions Plans record how they plan to deliver on this requirement.

NIFHA's support in this area is more generic, for example through our communications or involvement in inter-agency activity such as the Joint Housing Adaptations Group mentioned above. The latter has contributed to improved processes for managing adaptations to the homes of individuals with a disability. In 2013-14 this collaborative project led to the production of an Adaptations design toolkit which should improve the process for housing association tenants who require adaptations to their home.

Member associations can make use of this Toolkit which NIFHA helped develop in partnership with the DSD, Health Trusts, NIHE and housing association practitioners. The Toolkit is available on NIFHA's website and has been endorsed by the DHSSPS and DSD as best practice guidance for cross sector housing adaptations design benchmarking, interagency communications protocols and the provision of minor housing adaptations which do not require HSC Trust Occupational Therapy assessment

### **Additional Comments**

Over the last year much of NIFHA's lobbying and awareness-raising activities have focused on Supported Housing and the Supporting People programme. In particular we have been highlighting the challenges faced by housing associations working to develop much-needed accommodation for people with physical or mental disabilities.

One area of significant concern for NIFHA and our members is the increasing levels of community opposition to such schemes and the fact that the Department for Social Development requirement to undertake community consultation is sometimes viewed as an opportunity to exercise a veto on who can live in an area. This trend is worrying, for example, it can create barriers to relocating individuals with learning disabilities from accommodation in a residential care home to a mainstream home in the community.

NIFHA and its members remain committed to the mainstreaming of equality and good relations.

**Lucinda McMurrin**

Corporate Services Manager

NIFHA

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