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The Northern Ireland Court Service

Progress Report on Employment Equality Plan 2007-2009

Date: March 2009



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Northern Ireland Court Service published its first Employment Equality Plan (EEP) 2004-06 in response to the recommendation of the Criminal Justice Review 'for a workforce more reflective of the community that we serve'. The plan, based on calendar years, was developed in consultation with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

1.2 The second plan covers the period 2007-2009 and builds on the achievements in relation to equality of opportunity under Fair Employment regulations. The plan and outlines how the Court Service intends to ensure equality of opportunity in employment for people with different political opinion, religious belief, gender, age, marital status, sexual orientation, whether or not they have a disability and whether or not they have dependants.

2. Key Aims

2.1 The two main targets of the current plan are by 31 December 2009 to:

- maintain the religious balance in the Administrative grade (AO); and
- that the proportion of applicants for promotion will be gender reflective of the applicant pool.

2.2 A timetable of activity for each year of the EEP has been developed and a table summarising the activities undertaken is attached at **Annex 1**.

3. Current Position

3.1 The statutory obligations of monitoring the workforce under Articles 52 and 55 of the Fair Employment and Treatment Act ensure that the proportions of staff by community background and gender are regularly monitored and the findings are reported to the Equality Commission both annually and triennially. Workforce flows are reviewed and the figures are compared against the

Northern Ireland workforce figures from the 2001 Census and any areas of under-representation are identified together with proposals for corrective measures to address any imbalance.

3.2 In respect of the overall composition of community background, the overall trend of a higher Protestant representation continues (56%) with Roman Catholic representation at 35% and non-determined 9%. The organisational gender balance is 68% female and 32% male. This compares with 59% Protestant, 37% Roman Catholic, 4% non-determined, 67% female and 33% male representation at the end of the first plan.

3.3 There was one substantial recruitment scheme at AO grade in both years - 2007 and 2008. An examination of the recruitment applications shows that the Roman Catholic proportion and male proportion of applicants are both higher than their proportions in the organisation, demonstrating that the Court Service continues to attract applicants from the under represented groups and meet its stated objectives.

3.4 At a meeting with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (EC) in September 2008 following the Article 55 triennial review, the EC stated "it continues to be encouraging to note that the affirmative action measures undertaken in previous years have had significant results in terms of the overall proportion of Roman Catholics in the NI Court Service and particularly amongst applicants and appointees." The EC continues to advise that the welcoming statement for Roman Catholics is no longer required.

3.5 The Court Service has continued to be proactive in its outreach and in particular in maintaining our disability positive action programmes in conjunction with the Department of Employment and Learning's 'Access to Work' programme and other charitable and voluntary agencies including the Orchardville Society and the Cedar Foundation.

3.6 Work placements for people with disabilities have been facilitated in Londonderry, Laganside Courts, Court Funds Office, and the Civil Processing

Centre. New entrants with disabilities have had reasonable adjustments implemented including aptitude testing, assistive technology, a job coach, assessments by the RNIB and educational psychologists and physical adjustments to the workplace such as automatic doors.

3.7 The Plan includes the review of a number of Northern Ireland Court Service policies and the subsequent implementation of any recommendations from those reviews. However action on the planned review of Court Service policies was deferred to facilitate the work being taken forward in relation to the people project preparations for devolution and the analysis of our policies and terms and conditions against those of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

4. The way forward

4.1 With the advent of Devolution the planned timetable of activities for 2009 has been amended, as we will be aligning our policies to those of the NICS where appropriate to do so. We will however review our Dignity and Harmony at Work policy and refresh the pool of Harassment Investigation and Support officers. We will also participate in the UK's single largest survey of employer practices- the 'Opportunity Now' diversity benchmarking exercise - with members from the public, private and education sectors.

4.2 The Diversity team in HR will be meeting later on in the year with representatives from the Equality Commission to develop a new Employment Equality Plan for the years 2010-2012 which will be equality screened and issued for consultation.

**Report of Progress against Targets and Objectives in the NI Court
Service Employment Equality Plan for 2007 & 2008**

Target	Achieved?	Comments
To continue to formally monitor Equal Pay and report to HM Treasury to ensure that 'pay drift' does not occur	Yes	Annual Equal Pay Audits are undertaken by NISRA the results of which are reported to MB
The Court Service will focus on the need to continue shortening pay ranges and ensure that this is supported with clear and transparent progression arrangements	Yes	The department has continued to shorten pay bands year on year and staff are aware of how their annual pay rise is calculated. The current method of calculating pay progression is more transparent, in that staff are more able to easily calculate their journey time from the bottom to the top of their pay band.
To monitor proportions of staff by community background and gender against workforce figures from the 2001 Census, and identify any areas of under-representation	Yes	The Equality Commission recommended that a welcoming statement for Roman Catholics on recruitment adverts is no longer required
To conduct a review of workforce flows and report the findings to the Equality Commission for NI	Yes	The Equality Commission has provided positive feedback following the Article 55 Review
To develop and implement a programme to proactively encourage under-represented groups to view the Court service as a employer of choice	Yes	Recruitment schemes are advertised in disability sector organisations. Invitations for work placements have targeted children with physical and learning disabilities
To conduct a workforce Disability Survey	Yes	The Disability Survey was conducted in 2008 and the HRMS system was updated and amended to incorporate

		details on reasonable adjustments for disabled staff which have been implemented
To maintain our disability positive action programmes such as Access to Work and the Orchardville placements	Yes	Work placements have been facilitated in Londonderry, Laganside Courts, Court Funds Office & Civil Processing Centre
To ensure that all complaints of discrimination are dealt with appropriately	Yes	In 2007 no formal/informal complaints were recorded. In 2008 no formal & one informal complaint.
To ensure that outcomes from complaint investigation are followed up	Yes	
To provide learning events for new entrants in diversity and equality awareness	Yes	Training in Section 75 Equality Screening has also been provided to policy makers and & Disability Awareness to service centre staff
To maintain learning provision for managers in our Dignity and Harmony at Work Policy	Yes	One formal workshop was delivered to staff in 2007 and one in 2008. Advice & guidance is provided to managers regularly
All Human Resource Unit staff to have regular access to anti-discrimination law updates	Yes	Copied into written updates from HR providers and by attendance at events run by eg Legal Island, the Equality Commission, Business in the Community (Opportunity Now)
-To conduct an age audit of all policies, including a review of the age profile; -To implement any recommendations from the Flexible Working Policy review; -To review our disability code of practice and Good Practice	No	Action on the planned review of Court Service policies was deferred to facilitate the work being taken forward in relation to the people project preparations for devolution and the analysis of our

<p>Guide;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-To implement any recommendations from the age audit;-To implement the outcome of the Special Leave Policy review;-To review our Dignity & Harmony at Work Policy		<p>policies and terms and conditions against those of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.</p>
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