

# Public authority statutory equality and good relations duties

Annual progress report



Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Equality Scheme

Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan

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Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:

[www.Safefood.net/equality](http://www.Safefood.net/equality)

Signature:



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This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.

It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.

This report reflects progress made between April 2022 and March 2023.

## **Part A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme**

### **Question 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice**

In 2022/2023, please provide examples of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.

Safefood has promoted food safety and healthy eating on the island of Ireland in accordance with its legislative remit since December 1999. Safefood have made it a priority to communicate positively in a direct and clear manner to move consumers and those involved in the food chain towards a better understanding of food safety, nutrition and healthy eating. Our goal is to influence behaviour in the overall interests of improved public health. This is mainstreamed through our Corporate Plans and our annual Business Plans. These documents outline the role that Safefood takes in empowering consumers to make the necessary improvements to their choices and behaviour while maintaining our core values of dignity and respect.

Some examples of developments during April 2022 to March 2023 were:

## **Community Food Initiatives (CFIs)**

Safefood is immensely proud of its role funding Community Food Initiatives (CFIs) since 2010. By supporting sustainable projects which have a focus on food, it is helping to develop lifelong food skills and influence healthier choices. This local approach can have a lasting impact on the health of children, adults and their wider communities across the island of Ireland. Safefood looks forward to the future work of CFIs and the transformative effect they can have.

Safefood's Community Food Initiatives Programme aims to positively influence the eating habits of families with children in low-income communities by focusing on the skills and knowledge around food and healthy eating, healthier shopping and enhanced cooking skills. All of these are tangible, transferable skills that can benefit an entire community. The CFI model demonstrates how collaborating with communities can influence healthier food choices and learning lifelong skills. Funding of the CFI's has helped over 40,000 people by offering real and practical help in local communities by funding 44 projects.

The 2022-2024 programme was launched in March 2022. Thirteen leader community food programmes have been selected for funding, each based in one of the health regions in Northern Ireland & Ireland. In alignment with these projects Safefood will fund up to thirty-nine small projects (27 Ireland and 12 Northern Ireland) tailored to meet local needs related to healthy eating and food skills. The intention is to return to in-person delivery where possible in line with government guidance. As a result of the success and engagement with remote activity in addition to the core programme up to 26 community organisations will be funded to run a CFI at home project. Each project will engage families with children up to the age of 12 years with healthy eating by facilitating an initiative tailored to meet local needs related to healthy eating and food skills.

## **Knowledge Network**

Safefood's unique north/south position promotes cooperation linkages with stakeholders working in the food sector, public health and health promotion to strengthen the integrity of the food chain and improve public health. Members of the Knowledge Network form a community of over 3600 professionals working in food

businesses, environmental health, regulatory agencies, public health, food testing laboratories, research and education.

The Knowledge Network aims to form a dynamic and rewarding environment for the exchange of food safety information for mutual benefit of its members. It aims to bring together those involved in knowledge creation and application and policy development to support and enhance food safety. The Knowledge Network has created and augmented linkages across the island of Ireland between food safety professionals throughout the whole food chain since 2011.

### **All-island Food Poverty Network**

Food poverty, defined as the inability to access a nutritionally adequate diet, is a significant issue for many people on the island of Ireland. For example, recent research in Northern Ireland found 16% of adults were food insecure, 9% had low food security and 7% had very low food security.

The Network was established in 2009 to provide a co-ordinated and strategic approach to tackling food poverty on the island of Ireland. It supports the development of consensus on related issues, collaboration, and shared learning. The Network is co-chaired by Safefood and The Food Standards Agency, Northern Ireland.

Eighteen organisations are represented on the forum from Government departments and agencies, academia and NGOs. Members meet on a regular basis to share experiences and knowledge to help address the issue of food poverty on the island.

### **All-island Obesity Action Forum**

On 4 March 2023, World Obesity Day, the All-island Obesity Action Forum launched its position statement on obesity stigma. The statement was developed with members to set out how the forum will address obesity stigma. Obesity stigma refers to the negative attitudes and beliefs associated with obesity including bias, discrimination, stereotyping and social exclusion. People living with obesity experience stigma across several settings, and it has negative physical and mental health consequences. The statement asked members to commit to a set of actions aimed at reducing obesity stigma.

## Partnership working

Working in partnership is at the heart of Safefood's role as a North/South body. Whether in our communication campaigns, scientific research or professional networks, our partnership approach brings many positive connections and long-lasting relationships on the island of Ireland.

An innovative new partnership between Safefood and the Irish Football Association (IFA) in Northern Ireland used football to encourage children to adopt healthier eating and lifestyle habits. Safefood became the Irish FA's official safe and healthy eating partner back in June 2021. The two organisations came together to deliver a series of football-based programmes and events across Northern Ireland to teach young people the importance of creating healthy eating habits and being physically active from a young age.

The new partnership kicked off with children from primary schools participating in one day festivals that incorporated interactive and practical challenges and games to introduce children to the benefits of healthy eating and physical activity. The interactive resource titled 'On the ball - healthy know-how for active kids' was developed by Safefood to be delivered by the IFA's Let them Play Officers via a six-week after school programme. The programme educates children aged between 8 – 10-year-olds to make healthier choices in terms of physical activity and nutrition.

In the first quarter of 2023 Safefood launched its new partnership with Special Olympics Ireland called Health@Play which uses fun interactive games to help teach healthy, lifelong habits to younger athletes and their parents. The Health@Play programme is a first as it offers health education through sport to children with intellectual disabilities aged 4-15 years within their community clubs and schools. The launch took place in Belfast where Safefood staff were joined by some of the amazing Young Athletes who will take part in Health@Play.

As part of the 'India-Ireland Friendship Lecture Series' the Director of Nutrition in Safefood was invited to speak at the Indian Embassy in Dublin in March 2023. The lecture focused on 'Supporting and empowering healthy eating on the island of Ireland'.

**Question 2: Please provide examples of outcomes and/or the impact of equality action plans/ measures in 2022/23 (or append the plan with progress/examples identified).**

**Provision of accessible information services**

During the reporting period 2022/2023 the website was updated to meet the guidelines WCAG 2.1, with an Action plan put in place to resolve outstanding issues. The Accessibility statement was updated and agreed in a new format required by the new regulations. New guidance prepared and issued to authors on creating accessible reports.

**Staff training**

Safefood, as part of its Corporate Day held in Belfast in September 2022 organised a disability awareness training session for staff. Guide Dogs NI provided a speaker to come along and share their own personal life experiences about living with sight loss and owning a guide dog. The awareness session was a huge success with great feedback from everyone in attendance. For many staff the highlight of the Corporate Day was meeting a local guide dog owner and hearing first hand their experience of living with sight loss.

Safefood utilises online learning as part of its induction process. Employees during their induction process undertake a series of training modules on equality and disability awareness. As part of this online learning methodology the participants are tested at the end of each module to measure their learning. Results have shown high levels of assimilation of knowledge by participants who have undertaken these modules over the reporting period 2022/2023.

A new Recruitment & Selection training seminar was designed in late 2022 and rolled out to panel members in advance of interviews held in Q1 of 2023. The seminar included training on how to recognize and avoid unconscious bias in the recruitment process. To date the training seminar has been delivered to all Safefood staff who may be involved as panel members on future recruitment panels.

**Question 3: Has the application of the Equality Scheme commitments resulted in any changes to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2022/23 reporting period? (tick one box only)**

Yes  No (go to Q.4)  Not applicable (go to Q.4)

**3a** regarding the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, **what difference was made, or will be made**, for individuals, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

**3b** What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? (tick all that apply)

- As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy (please give details):
- As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise (please give details):
- As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact (please give details):
- As a result of changes to access to information and services (please specify and give details):
- Other (please specify and give details):

**Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures**

Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

**Question 4: Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2022/2023 reporting period? (tick one box only)**

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- Not applicable



Please provide any details and examples:

All job descriptions reflect the importance of equality within Safefood.

**Question 5: Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2022/23 reporting period? (tick one box only)**

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Safefood's business planning process includes a commitment to S75 statutory duties.

**Question 6: In the 2022/23 reporting period were objectives/ targets/ performance measures relating to the Section 75 statutory duties integrated into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? (tick all that apply)**

- Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- Yes, in some departments/jobs
- No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's ongoing corporate plan
- No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2022/2023 report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Not Applicable

## Equality action plans/measures

**Question 7: Within the 2022/23 reporting period, please indicate the number of:**

- Actions completed: 1
- Actions ongoing: 2
- Actions to commence: 0

### All groups

Campaigns, initiatives and strategies addressing food safety and health issues gave specific consideration of how best to reach target groups while avoiding social stigma and blame. During the reporting period 2022/2023 there was ongoing consideration given for each campaign, initiative and strategy.

### People with disabilities

To ensure that the Disability Action Plan targets were met Safefood continued to review information provisions to ascertain if more tailored communication approaches were required. The aim was to remove or ease barriers to general communication methods and develop positive behavioural changes.

Where possible Safefood engages in consultation with national charities, public authorities and government departments, awareness/advocacy groups and focus groups across the island to inform development of its campaigns/resources. All campaigns are guided by informative research including with each target audience.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the Disability Action Plan 2021-2025 was carried out throughout the reporting period.

### Provision of accessible information services

Pro-actively developed in accessible formats Safefood's information, both written and web-based, to suit the needs of all equality groups. Safefood sought to enhance Website accessibility and technology to suit the needs of different groups, whilst ensuring the website continued to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

The website has now been redesigned to meet updated guidelines WCAG 2.1, with an

Action plan put in place to resolve outstanding issues. The Accessibility statement was updated and agreed in a new format required by the new regulations. New guidance prepared and issued to authors on creating accessible reports.

An EQIA Screening was undertaken on the Digital Strategy 2022-2024 in Q4 of 2022.

An awareness session on the work of the Communications Directorate on accessibility guidelines and new accessibility processes adopted in 2022 has been prepared and will be delivered by the Communications team to all staff in Q2 2023.

**Question 8: Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2022/23 reporting period (points not identified in an appended plan):**

As part of its 5-year review of its Equality Scheme Safefood undertook an updated audit of inequalities and prepared a new S75 Equality Action Plan for the period 2023-25

**Question 9: In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2022/23 reporting period, the following have been identified: (tick all that apply)**

- Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality
- Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way
- Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities
- Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

**Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)**

**Question 10: Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: (tick one box only)**

- All the time       Sometimes       Never

**Question 11: Please provide any details and examples of good practice in consultation during the 2022/23 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:**

Where possible Safefood engages in consultation with national charities, public authorities and government departments, awareness groups and focus groups across the island for its campaigns.

**Question 12: In the 2022/23 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were most frequently used by consultees: (tick all that apply)**

- Face to face meetings
- Focus groups
- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- Questionnaires
- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- Internet discussions
- Telephone consultations
- Other (please specify):

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

Safefood continues to find that the level of consultation by consultees remains low with consultees citing limited resources as a reason for not participating or responding to consultation exercises.

**Question 13: Were any awareness raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2022/23 reporting period? (tick one box only)**

Yes       No       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Not Applicable

**Question 14: Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2022/2023 reporting period? (tick one box only)**

Yes       No       Not applicable – no commitment to review.

**Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

**Question 15: Please provide the number of policies screened during the year (as recorded in screening reports):**

Safefood screened one policy during the year.

**Question 16: Please provide the number of assessments that were consulted upon during 2022/2023:**

- Policy consultations conducted with **screening** assessment presented.
- Policy consultations conducted **with an equality impact assessment (EQIA)** presented.
- Policy consultations for an **EQIA** alone.

**Question 17: Please provide details of the main consultations conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:**

No consultations on assessments were conducted during the period 2022-2023.  
Consultation was conducted on the S75 Action Plan 2023-25.

**Question 18: Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? (tick one box only)**

- Yes       No concerns were raised       No       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Not Applicable

### **Arrangements for publishing the results of assessments (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

**Question 19: Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2022/2023 reporting period? (tick one box only)**

- Yes       No       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Not Applicable

### **Arrangements for monitoring and publishing the results of monitoring (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

**Question 20: From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2022/2023 reporting period? (tick one box only)**

- Yes       No, already taken place  
 No, scheduled to take place at a later date       Not applicable

Please provide any details:

Not Applicable

**Question 21: In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? (tick one box only)**

- Yes       No       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Not Applicable

**Question 22: Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2022/2023 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:**

Not Applicable

**Question 23: Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:**

Not Applicable

### **Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)**

**Question 24: Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2022/2023, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.**

Safefood continued to provide equality awareness training to new employees as part of their induction process. This training was facilitated through online learning courses.

A new Recruitment & Selection training seminar was designed in late 2022 and rolled out to panel members in advance of interviews held in Q1 of 2023. The seminar included training on how to recognize and avoid unconscious bias in the recruitment process. To date the training seminar has been delivered to all Safefood staff who may be involved as panel members on future recruitment panels.

**Question 25: Please provide any examples of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:**

Safefood utilises online learning as part of its induction process. Employees during their induction process undertake a series of training modules on equality and disability awareness. As part of this online learning methodology the participants are tested at the end of each module to measure their learning. Results have shown high levels of assimilation of knowledge by participants who have undertaken these modules.

## **Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)**

**Question 26: Please list any examples of where monitoring during 2022/2023, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation to access to information and services:**

Not Applicable

## **Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)**

**Question 27: How many complaints in relation to the Equality Scheme have been received during 2022/2023?**

Insert number here:0

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

No complaints were received during the reporting period 2022/2023

## **Section 3: Looking Forward**

**Question 28: Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:**

A 5-year review of the Equality Scheme was completed in the first quarter of 2023 for the period of 2017-2023. As part of the 5-year review an Audit of Inequalities was undertaken and a s75 Action Plan 2023-25 developed.

**Question 29: Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? (please provide details)**

Not Applicable

**Question 30: In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what equality and good relations priorities are anticipated over the next reporting period? (please tick any that apply)**

- Employment
- Goods, facilities and services
- Legislative changes



- Organisational changes/ new functions
- Nothing specific, more of the same
- Other (please state):