



# **MLKDC Five Year Review of the Equality Scheme**

**Section 75 of the  
Northern Ireland Act 1998**

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# **EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

## **Public Authority Five Year Review Report**

This report template includes a number of self assessment questions under the twelve key elements of an equality scheme. Please enter information at the relevant part of each Section in the template and ensure that it is submitted to the Commission electronically (by completing this template) **and** in writing, with a signed cover letter from the Chief Executive or, in his/her absence, the Deputy Chief Executive (or equivalent).

Name of public authority

**Maze Long Kesh Development Corporation**

Equality Officer Name and contact details

Director of Finance and Corporate Services  
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## **Opening Statement**

MLKDC's strategic direction and business objectives incorporates information from the five-year review of the Equality Scheme, the development of the audit of inequalities and the development of issues for inclusion into the equality action plan and the disability action plan.

This process has bought MLKDC clarity on responsibilities, recognition of opportunities to develop and improve what we do and how we do it, and in the context of an overall commitment to demonstrate the best possible operation within our current remit.

Our Business Plan Objectives were delivered by a framework characterised by evidence-informed practice and decision making, guiding what we do in respect of all activities promoted by MLKDC.

The objectives were supported with a performance framework linked to organisational and staff development, risk management, and outward-looking strategic and accessible and inclusive operational communications.

These reviews have enabled us to reassess and promote the work of MLKDC.

We have recognised the fundamental roles of effective and robust corporate governance, resource management and workforce development in achieving our business objectives.

## Executive Summary

Please provide some main conclusions in terms of:

**a) To what extent has your public authority's approved scheme provided a workable basis for mainstreaming the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations into policy-making over the past five years?**

- The MLKDC approved scheme provides a workable framework in which to discharge its statutory duty in relation to equality.
- The responsibility for the implementation of the scheme rests with the Board and the Chief Executive.
- To facilitate the process of implementation the Director of Finance & Corporate Services directs all equality agenda items.
- The overall management of disability related issues resides under the Director of Finance & Corporate Services Directorate. The Disability Action plan is a corporate document. The actions included in the plan are a testament to the value placed on removing barriers to services and increasing positive attitude to disabled people.
- Top level commitment from the Board and the Chief Executive were essential in ensuring that the scheme was mainstreamed.
- All staff training opportunities fed into the development of the equality and diversity action plans.

MLKDC incorporates equality and good relations within its business plan objectives. The business plan objectives for each year are set to enable MLKDC to fulfil its current remit, as defined by the Executive Office (TEO).

Whilst awaiting ministerial agreement on the development of the Maze Long Kesh site during the period of this review (2018-2023), alongside the restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, developments in policy and service have been limited. However even within these constraints on operation, MLKDC continues to be mindful of equality and good relations duties in all operational work.

Since inception, the MLKDC has trained all staff and board members on their responsibilities under S75. The organisation has also completed several workshops ensuring that policy work has been screened for equality assessment.

In relation to the core MLKDC business operation, the necessary equality and diversity systems are firmly embedded. The MLKDC equality steering group meets quarterly to monitor and coordinate action. The equality steering group has the organisation's full commitment and to demonstrate this it is attended by the Director of Finance & Corporate Services who is responsible for all equality matters.

As stated, and experienced by many organisations, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on our core activities. However, MLKDC did manage operations online which ensured policy reviews and online meetings and training continued during the reporting period.

This review has provided the opportunity for MLKDC to consider the importance of

ensuring that equality actions are supported with a performance framework linked to organisational and staff development, risk management and outward-looking strategic, accessible and inclusive operational communications. We have recognised the fundamental roles of effective and robust corporate governance, resource management and staff development in achieving our business objectives.

This review has enabled us to reassess our commitment to equality, diversity and to articulate its important role across the organisation both internally and externally.

• **What key lessons have been learnt over the past five years in terms of effectively implementing the approved equality scheme?**

We have learned:

- The importance of bringing key senior staff along on the journey from start to finish.
- The importance of creating processes that enable people to do their work and meet the needs of the equality agenda in a timely and realistic way.
- We have worked hard to review our processes and achieve buy in to ensure good governance.
- Training and regular refresher courses are important.
- It is essential to keep staff informed and regularly highlight key messages to keep them prominent.
- Periodic review of systems and policies ensure all key MLKDC documents are reviewed in a timely manner.
- Continue to focus on inclusion and accessibility in all our activities.
- During the Covid 19 Pandemic staff welfare was given the upmost importance with the provision of a specific staff wellness programme made available.

c) **What more needs to be done to achieve outcomes for individuals from the nine equality categories?**

MLKDC is operating within a limited and restricted remit and therefore does not believe that it has adequate opportunity to achieve further outcomes for external individuals from the nine equality outcomes. Even with a small staff complement we continue to ensure that we review and update our actions in relation to meeting our equality and diversity outcomes for internal and external individuals.

- MLKDC has developed excellent working arrangements to further our knowledge of the key issues of Section 75 and ensure that this will continue.
- Ensure our website which is fully compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1AA, is accessible to a wide range of people.

- **Purpose of the Scheme**

- 1. A general introductory statement specifying the purpose of the scheme and the public authority's commitment to the statutory duties.**

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ('the Act') requires the MLKDC, in carrying out all its functions, powers and duties, to have due regard of the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group,
- age, marital status or sexual orientation,
- between men and women generally,
- between persons with a disability and persons without,
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

In addition, without prejudice to its obligations above, the Act requires the MLKDC in carrying out its functions, to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Schedule 9 of the Act requires the MLKDC to set out in an Equality Scheme how it proposes to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75.

The MLKDC is committed to the fulfilment of its Section 75 obligations in all parts of its organisation and will commit necessary resources (in terms of people, time and money) to ensure that the statutory duties are complied with and that the Equality Scheme is implemented effectively and on time.

MLKDC ensures that there are effective internal arrangements in place to ensure that the duties are effectively complied with and for monitoring and reviewing progress.

MLKDC has developed a Disability Action Plan and an Equality Action Plan following an Audit of Inequalities demonstrating its commitment towards its Section 75 duties and actions to take forward. MLKDC is in the process of updating these documents. This five-year review of the Equality Scheme has been helpful in our journey to improve equality across all functions of MLKDC.

- 1a) To what extent were senior management involved in ensuring scheme compliance over the 5 year period and what further steps could be undertaken to ensure effective internal arrangements?**

The Business Plan objectives for each year have been set to enable MLKDC to fulfil its current remit, as defined by The Executive Office (TEO). They seek to contribute to the outcomes-based Programme for Government (PfG), as far as is practicable and achievable within the current constrained framework within which MLKDC must operate. Without approval, it is assumed that TEO will be content for MLKDC to operate in line with these Business Plan Objectives, as has been the practice in previous years, in the absence of ministerial agreement on the way forward. MLKDC

will continue to operate on that basis, unless otherwise instructed by TEO.

These objectives are as follows:

To identify and explore possible options that could help to maximize the economic, historical and reconciliation potential of the site and inform the development of a regeneration strategy, with the aim of securing ministerial agreement on the way forward for MLK.

To fulfil MLKDC's statutory and landowner responsibilities in relation to health and safety, estate management and the protection of the listed and retained buildings and scheduled monuments, taking accounts of requirements relating to public access.

To honour MLKDC's agreements with its tenants and occupiers, supporting and facilitating them, as appropriate, in their activities and future planning.

To ensure MLKDC fulfils its corporate responsibilities with good governance, propriety, and regularity.

The MLKDC Business Plan Objectives shape the future direction of all its services.

All equality reports are presented to the MLKDC Board and Senior Management Team for consideration. This process ensures the monitoring of the equality agenda throughout the MLKDC operational management process. This has had a significant impact in focusing all senior staff and board members on the equality agenda.

MLKDC's commitment to the Equality Scheme, through staffing, resources and the comprehensive reporting mechanism has enabled the ongoing development of the equality agenda.

**1b) Outline annual direct expenditure of resources to ensure that the statutory duties were complied with, in terms of staff and money over the past 5 years, and comment on the extent that all necessary resources were allocated.**

MLKDC is committed to the implementation of the Equality Scheme and has provided adequate resources to support the process.

MLKDC has appointed the Director of Finance & Corporate Services who is responsible for the equality agenda. He has direct responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the Equality Scheme, supported by other staff members, including managerial and business support.

All direct costs in relation to the Equality Scheme implementation such as consultation, meetings and fees for external professional services, are centrally controlled within the Finance and Corporate Services Directorate.

However, it should be made clear that the implementation of the equality agenda is not solely the responsibility of the Director of Finance and Corporate Services or of one



directorate.

Due to the limited remit and reduced staffing structure, MLKDC does not have a dedicated resource or budget available.

## **An outline of how the public authority intends to assess its compliance with the Section 75 duties and for consulting on matters to which a duty under that section is likely to be relevant.**

### **2a) Outline impacts and outcomes (for the public authority and/or individuals from the nine equality categories) over the past five years and what further steps could be undertaken to build on these or address underreporting?**

MLKDC has developed an Equality Action Plan which provides a record of impacts and outcomes over the past five years. The annual report to the Equality Commission provides details of all action undertaken each year.

Outcomes for people in Section 75 categories are listed below.

#### **Internal**

- Equality is mainstreamed in the MLKDC.
- Staff are better trained and informed on issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Employee monitoring has improved.
- A disability action plan has been developed during this period building on previous plans.

#### **External**

- Consultation on all new or revised policies has kept Section 75 groups informed of all developments within MLKDC. In addition, information is published on the website keeping the public up to date on developments within MLKDC.
- Relationships with Section 75 groups are maintained by attending meetings, seminars, workshops, AGM's, launches and other general invitations.

#### **Outcomes**

The changes ensuing from all our equality work directly improve our services.

- Improvements in our community outreach work and engagement.
- Improvements in communication to stakeholders.
- More awareness of Section 75 issues internally and externally.
- Improved policy development processes.
- Better partnership working.
- Informed decision making.
- Increased participation in decision making.
- More knowledge of customers and stakeholders.
- Addressing representation in the workforce.
- Focus on disability issues.

- Better informed senior leadership team.

### **Impacts and Outcomes**

- The overall outcome is that there is a noticeable difference in the attention afforded to equality of opportunity, good relations and accessibility and inclusion issues.
- All reports presented to MLKDC are required to have equality built into the process at an early stage. This addresses equality across all reporting processes.
- Annual reports are a good vehicle for recording the development cycle of equality.
- Annual reports are written and circulated internally to senior managers and the Chief Executive before being presented to the Board.

### **2b) Outline the number of equality scheme related consultation exercises undertaken by your authority over the past five years? Set out the number and percentage related to screening exercises and to EQIAs and indicate the extent that your scheme helped you to engage with external stakeholders?**

The following consultation exercises were implemented during this reporting period:

- Equality Action Plan,
- Disability Action Plan,
- Equality Scheme,
- Review of consultee list.

### **2c) Indicate if your list of consultees was amended during the 5 year period and what further steps could be taken to develop your level of engagement and consultation?**

During this reporting period MLKDC completed a thorough review of the consultee list. All consultees have been consulted and asked if they wish to remain on the list and their preferred contact method.

### **2d) To what extent did your authority consult directly with directly affected individuals as well as with representative groups.**

MLKDC continues to consult with all consultees, when relevant, in compliance with the current Equality Scheme.

The consultees list was comprehensively reviewed in 2025. MLKDC are committed through our new Equality Action Plan to review stakeholder engagements projects.

**The authority's arrangements for assessing and consulting on the impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted on the promotion of equality of opportunity.**

- 3a) Outline and discuss the number of policies your authority subject to screening over the past five years, setting out the number and percentage of 'policies screened in' on the basis of equality considerations and the percentage 'screened in' on the basis of the good relations duty.**

MLKDC is operating within a limited and restricted operational basis and therefore has a limited list of policies to subject to the equality screening process. The policy work undertaken is mostly reviews of existing policies which, to date, have been screened out. We will continue to ensure effective screening arrangements, when necessary, by maintaining equality checks, in all reporting mechanisms.

**The authority's arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact of policies adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity.**

- 4a) To what extent were sufficient arrangements put in place to collect data relating to the nine equality categories to monitor the impact of policies and what could your authority do in future to develop monitoring arrangements?**

MLKDC is operating within a limited and restricted operational basis and therefore has a limited list of policies to subject to the equality screening process. On this basis there has been no opportunity to collect further data relating to the nine categories to monitor the impact of policies. This relates to the external stakeholder list.

**The authority's arrangements for publishing the results of equality impact assessments and of monitoring any adverse impact of policies adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity.**

- 5a) Indicate the number of reports published outlining the results of EQIAs and monitoring over the past five years, and outline what your authority could do in future in relation to improving the publication of EQIA results and monitoring.**

MLKDC did not undertake any EQIA's during this reporting period.

**To what extent did consideration of EQIAs and consultations contribute to a change in policy, as opposed to policy decisions which would probably have been made in any event by your authority?**

N/A

## **The authority's arrangements for training staff on issues relevant to the duties.**

MLKDC is committed to, and has, expended considerable efforts and resources in training and developing staff over the past 5 years.

Staff training on relevant equality and disability related issues are delivered annually to staff and board members. A list of training courses is itemised in the Equality and Disability Actions Plans and included in the annual reports to the Equality Commission.

MLKDC is conscious of the need to keep the training process dynamic and challenging. Training must be continuous and innovative to keep equality issues at the heart of decision making and policy development. Please note that due to Covid-19 restrictions, training was delivered online.

The following equality related training courses were delivered in the past three years.

- Staff training on Disability Equality Awareness including sight loss;
- Board training on Disability Equality Awareness including sight loss;
- Staff training on Equality Awareness, Section 75, Equality Scheme responsibilities;
- Board training on Equality Awareness, Section 75, Equality Scheme responsibilities;
- Staff training on Unconscious Bias;
- Board training on Unconscious Bias ;
- Staff Training on Rural Needs;
- Access to training courses on Civil Service training: Wellness and Mental Health training.

## **The authority's arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and to services provided by the authority.**

**8a) To what extent were sufficient arrangements put in place to ensure and assess public access to information and to services provided by the authority?**

Sufficient arrangements are put in place to ensure public access to information and services provided by the MLKDC when appropriate and in compliance with our Equality Scheme.

## **The authority's timetable for measures proposed in the scheme.**

### **9a) Outline the extent to which measures set out in the action plan original timetable have been implemented. Any detailed information should be included in as an appendix to the report.**

MLKDC is pleased to report that it has achieved substantial progress during the past four years however some actions have been forwarded to year 5 due to delays following Covid-19.

MLKDC is currently completing year 5 of the equality action plan. We are in the process of developing a new four-year action plan based on a review of the Equality Scheme and an audit of inequalities.

The updated Equality Scheme, the new four-year Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan will be out for consultation in 2025.

## **Details of how the scheme will be published.**

### **10a) Were scheme commitments in this section delivered and what evidence supports this view?**

MLKDC has met its commitment to deliver actions outlined in the Equality Scheme. The annual progress reports highlight the achievements These include:

- Section 75 Annual reports all completed and submitted on time;
- Implementing the Equality Action Plan year 1- 3. All actions reported on and updated in the annual reports;
- Consultation on all plans, including draft action plans;
- Relevant reports published on the website;
- Monitoring of all actions;
- Screening and EQIA's reports as required;
- Development of overall training programme;
- Delivering training for staff and board members and reported through the annual reports;
- Evaluation of all training programmes;
- Assessing access to information and services ensuring information is presented in a timely fashion on the website. The website is fully compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1AA. We have updated our consultation list and ensured that consultees receive information in the method which is most applicable to their needs.
- Publication and communication of equality schemes to board, staff and consultees

All consultees will be consulted on the review of the Equality Scheme and the Equality Action Plan (2024-2027) A final updated Equality Scheme with an accompanying Equality Action Plan will be presented to the Equality Commission and uploaded onto the MLKDC website.

Previous schemes were consulted on successfully.

## **The authority's arrangements for dealing with complaints arising from a failure to comply with the scheme.**

### **11a) Outline the number and nature of complaints received by your authority, and what your authority could do in future to develop its complaints handling process and learn from complaints.**

MLKDC did not receive complaints arising from a failure to comply with the scheme. during this review period. The Equality scheme outlines our commitments to dealing with complaints if they arise.

## **A commitment to conducting a review of the scheme within five years of its submission to the Equality Commission and to forwarding a report of this review to the Equality Commission.**

### **12a) What has been your authority's experience of conducting this review? To what extent has the Commission's guidance been useful in undertaking the review?**

This five-year review has provided MLKDC with an excellent opportunity to take time out from the yearly business objectives to conduct an overall review of our commitment to equality and diversity actions, through our operating processes and systems. The Commission's guidance has been useful in undertaking the review.