

# 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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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 2024 and March 2025

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

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

**Question 1. In 2024-25, 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 has 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 plays in empowering consumers to make the necessary improvements to their choices and behaviour while maintaining our core values of dignity and respect. The consumer on the island of Ireland is at the centre of both Safefood's vision and mission. Safefood will build on its targeted and widely acclaimed consumer messages to further educate, inform, and motivate the consumer to put food safety and healthy eating at the centre stage of their lifestyle choices.

#### **Current position and challenges for Safefood**

Food safety and healthy eating continue to be of increasing national and international importance from a health perspective and underpin Safefood's approach to delivering targeted consumer support. The current obesity epidemic on the island of Ireland poses a major public health challenge. People make healthier and safer food choices when living in an environment that supports these choices. Responding to these challenges, Safefood will strive to create messages and develop initiatives that are

rooted in the everyday lives of our target audiences and communicate with people in the context of what matters to them regarding food and health.

### **Importance of Nutrition and Food Safety to Health**

Obesity is a progressive, chronic, and complex disease affecting people of all ages, genders, race, with or without disabilities and with or without dependents. It is associated with other chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, several types of cancer, pain, and musculoskeletal disorders. Children who are overweight or obese may also experience social consequences, such as bullying, stigmatization and exclusion. Many, many factors are involved in the development of obesity, whether in children or adults, including our wider food, physical activity and media environments, social determinants like education and income, as well as genetics. The vast majority of these are outside the control of individuals.

Research into health inequalities in Northern Ireland reveals certain equality groups are more inclined to predominate at the lower socio-economic levels for example men, people with disabilities, young people, young mothers. Historically, Roman Catholics have been associated with greater social disadvantages than Protestants (for example, unemployment differentials). Whilst there has been a general convergence of employment activity levels between the two groups, other research looking at residential segregation, for example, shows that segregation still exists with different experiences felt by the two communities.

There are many factors that increase the risk of falling into poverty, the main risks being childhood factors such as childhood poverty and parental qualifications and family factors such as family breakdown. In addition, disability, labour market factors such as worklessness, personal and parental drug and alcohol addiction, living in rural areas, debt and ethnicity were identified as factors.

Some examples of developments during April 2024 to March 2025 were: -

### **Inequalities in Access to Safe and Healthy Eating on the island of Ireland**

Safefood research has shown that the most vulnerable groups, and where there is likely to be inequalities in access to safe and healthy eating, are single parent families, older people, low-income families with teenage children, young people, and

people with disabilities. Safefood recognises that these groups are found in all the equality categories and that its communication messages must be inclusive. Food poverty and safe eating is a reality for many people on the island of Ireland.

Examples of how Safefood is working pro-actively to address these equality and access concerns is demonstrated through its Community Food Initiatives (CFIs), the Knowledge Network, the All-island Food Poverty Network and its Partnership Working which bring together NGO, community groups, government agencies and government departments on the island of Ireland.

### Food Environment Campaign 2024-2028

A new Food Environment campaign to protect children's health was launched in June 2024 in partnership with the Departments of Health in Ireland and Northern Ireland, the Public Health Agency, the HSE, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland and the Food Standards Agency. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the unhealthy food environment, how this is harmful to children's health and why it needs to change. Communications will continue across 2025 aimed at raising people's awareness of the issue.

### 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 were selected for funding, each based in one of the health regions in Northern Ireland & Ireland. In alignment with these projects Safefood funded 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 aim of the programme was to positively influence the eating habits of families with children in low-income communities.

An event was held in 2024 for the Community Food Initiatives Leaders and others working in the community and food poverty space. At this event contributions were heard from organisations participating in the 2022-2024 Community Food Initiatives programme. The Leaders shared insights into the projects and events they have delivered and the impact of their work in communities across the island of Ireland. Two videos were launched in March 2025 to promote the impact of Community Food Initiative programme and the call out for applications to funding. The videos were created in Q4 2024 and showed initiatives in action in Galway and Belfast. Boosted on social media and YouTube, to date the videos have had 223,967 views and 338 interactions.

In February 2025, Safefood and SECAD began inviting applications for funding under the Community Food Initiatives Programme 2025-2028 (CFI core programme). The funding notice was shared widely with community networks and food poverty stakeholders. The call for applications closed in March 2025. Two information sessions on the programme and application process were held during this time. 41 applications were received, 29 from Ireland and 12 from Northern Ireland. The applications will be evaluated during April 2025. Funding applications for the CFI cross-border partnership and CFI innovate will open later in 2025.

### 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. The Knowledge Network membership currently stands at over 3,900 members, whilst the number of Safefood for business users stands at approximately 5,800, of which over 5,000 are currently active.

The Safefood for Business (SFFB) eLearning platform continues to see strong engagement and growth. As of the end of March 2025, the platform hosts a total of approximately 10,250 registered users, with over 9,300 actively using the platform. A new three-year strategy for the Knowledge Network Programme has been agreed and will begin in July 2025.

### 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. The Network was established in 2009 to provide a coordinated 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.

The All-island Food Poverty Network hosted its annual event on 17 September 2024 in Belfast and online. This event explored the current conversation on food poverty on the island of Ireland. Speakers discussed effective ways to talk about food poverty and share interventions creating change in their communities. A total of 101 participants attended online and there were 47 in-person attendees.

The All-island Food Poverty Network met twice in Q1 of 2025. The Ireland subgroup met in February 2025, and the NI subgroup met in March 2025, with both subgroups planning to meet again in May 2025.

### 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 partnership between Safefood and the Irish Football Association (IFA) in Northern Ireland called the 'On the Ball' programme 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 'On the Ball' programme resumed in schools during September 2024. 800 school pupils were reached prior to the summer break and more during festivals. Social content was captured pre-summer with two Northern Ireland international women's players, speaking about healthy eating and sport. This content was posted on Safefood social media channels during October and November 2024 coinciding with Senior Men's and Women's fixtures to keep the partnership live.

UEFA selected Safefood's 'On the Ball' programme to be featured in a new resource to be shared with national soccer associations across Europe in 2025. They are developing the 'Take Care' toolkit which is a comprehensive resource designed to enable national football associations, leagues, and clubs to have a positive impact on the lives of young people by integrating these resources into daily football activities. An 8-minute video was produced on the topic of Nutrition for the toolkit, in which Safefood's 'On the Ball' resource will be highlighted as an example of positive work being carried out in this area.

'Healthy eating for sport' is a new resource in partnership with the GAA. Hardcopies of the resources were provided to the U10s teams in each of 600 GAA healthy clubs in 2024 (for context, there are over 2,200 clubs across the island of Ireland – in 2024 28% of all clubs were involved). Hard copies of the resource were printed and distributed to clubs in Q4 of 2024. The resource pack was also made available digitally on 'Tobar,' the GAA's learning platform and resource hub for all coaches and teams. The resources have been shared with the Public Health Authority (PHA) to be adapted for distribution in partnership with Ulster GAA and Ulster Rugby.

In 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.

Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s) were agreed for 2024 including the participation of 5 clubs, a reach of 100 athletes and 100 parents. The first information session for prospective parents and coaches took place in April 2024 to encourage sign-ups to the “health@play” programme. Four clubs received training for delivery of the ‘Health at Play’ programme in April 2024 from locations including Athy, Galway, Waterford and Down with the first club having started delivery in May 2024. A further five groups participated in a ‘Health@Play’ training session for coaches in February 2025.

### **Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty in Ireland**

All public bodies in Ireland, including Safefood as a North South Body, have a statutory duty to promote equality, prevent discrimination, and protect the human rights of their employees, customers, service users, and everyone affected by their policies and plans. Since 2014, the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (also known as the Public Sector Duty) has been part of the legislative framework governing human rights and equality in Ireland. Section 42 (1) of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 states that “A public body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination.
- Promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services.
- Protect the human rights of its members, staff, and the persons to whom it provides services.”

Implementing the Duty means public bodies address human rights and equality issues in a proactive way, rather than waiting until an issue or complaint arises, before addressing it. The Duty has an important role to play in supporting Safefood to deliver efficient accessible services to citizens and communities, particularly those at risk of inequality and discrimination. It supports a public service-wide approach to equality, human rights, diversity, and inclusion. The Duty applies across all functions

of the Body, and implementing it puts equality and human rights into the mainstream of how Safefood carries out its daily work.

Safefood is committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Act by advancing equality and respect for human rights by pursuing a proactive approach to equality and human rights issues in all aspects of its work. Safefood recognises that the Equality and Human Rights Public Sector Duty is an ongoing obligation, which must be continually engaged with and is integral to operational and planning processes. This commitment to the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty compliments seamlessly with Safefood's fulfilment of its statutory equality and good relations duties, and implementing Equality Scheme commitments, under Section 75 in Northern Ireland.

Drawing on the available evidence, including the knowledge and experience of its staff and consumers to whom it provides services, Safefood undertook an assessment to identify key equality and human rights issues which are relevant to its objectives. This included identifying structures and initiatives that are already in place to support human rights and equality.

In its day-to-day work and particularly in its dealings with stakeholders, Safefood ensures that no member of the public or other stakeholders suffer discrimination in interactions with the Body under any of the protected grounds; gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, disability, age, race, religion and membership of the Traveller community. Safefood extends the same equality of treatment to its staff. Safefood has developed a Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Action Plan as a framework to give ongoing effect to both Section 42(1) and Section 42(2) of the Duty for the period 2023-2025 to address the equality and human rights issues identified in the assessment. This implementation plan sets out: the values that motivate Safefood's concern for equality and human rights and their implications for Safefood priorities and processes; the assessment of equality and human rights issues relevant to the functions and purpose of the Body; actions to enable ongoing implementation of the Duty; how the Address step of the Duty will be implemented in an ongoing manner through an equality and human rights impact assessment as part of the development or review of plans, policies, strategies and programmes, and in a strategic manner through targeted plans, policies and actions that directly address

equality and human rights issues; and how the Report step of the Duty will be implemented each year.

## **Good Relations**

S75 also requires public bodies to have regard to the desirability to promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion, and racial background. Safefood believes by working towards comprehensive evidence-based research which allows comparison and co-operation across the island of Ireland, as well as working in active co-operation through local initiatives in communities in Northern Ireland, that it is contributing to promoting greater respect between the Protestant and Catholic and ethnic minority populations in Northern Ireland.

This co-operative, collaborative approach is a hallmark of how Safefood works. Safefood also believes that it has the potential to improve engagement with all the equality grouping categories and build better relationships with these groups and other key stakeholders. It also provides an opportunity to better foster good relations by focusing on ensuring that information is created to be accessible to all and where it is necessary suitable alternative formats are provided with clear advice on how to access them.

**Question 2. Please provide examples of outcomes and/or the impact of equality action plans/ measures in 2024-25 (or append the plan with progress/examples identified).**

### **Provision of Accessible Information Services**

Since 2023 the Safefood website has been regularly 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 was prepared and issued to authors on creating accessible reports.

A strong communications programme supporting the increasing need to promote food safety and hygiene to consumers continues to be delivered with the emphasis targeting specific audiences who are at greater risk of food poisoning in the home because of their vulnerabilities. Safefood aims to ensure that the methods of communication are equal and inclusive and adequately reaches those groups which experience inequality in accessing nutrition or whose patterns of consumption need to change to promote healthier food for life.

Safefood engages effectively with local community groups as well as national groups to take on board views on how best to promote nutritional and food safety messages targeted at people who have greatest need for this advice. Safefood works on a partnership basis to ensure a comprehensive and fully rounded view on health and food safety issues is heard and expressed. All campaigns are guided by informative research including with each target audience.

Safefood will also continue to make information available in alternative formats where possible (braille, audio, large print etc.) including hard copy when requested, including information requested in alternative languages other than English or Irish. It is known from contact with relevant agencies and charities that people want to access information in several formats, and this includes those who have difficulties accessing information because of disabilities.

### **Staff Training**

To aid staff in carrying out equality and human rights assessments when drafting or

reviewing policies, plans or programmes, Safefood has developed a webinar to provide refresher training to those staff involved in the EQIA Screening of these policies and programmes. This refresher training was delivered to a core group of staff involved in policy screening during February 2024 with further cohorts of staff to receive training throughout the remainder of 2024-25.

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 2024-25.

A Recruitment & Selection training seminar, designed back in late 2022, has been delivered to panel members, both internal and external panel members, in advance of any recruitment exercises completed during the period 2024-25. The seminar includes 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 any future recruitment panels.

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) have developed an eLearning module to support and encourage staff in public bodies to understand equality and human rights concepts, principles and legislation, and build a shared understanding of equality and human rights in the public service, supporting better quality of services and a better work environment. HR staff have undertaken this e-learning module as part of refresher training on equality and human rights during 2024-25 and consideration is now being given to incorporating the eLearning module into Safefood's online training as part of its future staff induction process.

**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 2024-25 reporting period?**

- A. Yes
- B. No (go to Q.4)
- C. Not Applicable (go to Q.4)

**Answer: B. No (go to Q.4)**

Please provide any details and examples:

Not Applicable

**Question 3a. With regard to 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:

Not Applicable

**Question 3b. What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)?**

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

**Answer: Not Applicable**

## 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 2024-25 reporting period?**

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

**Answer: D. No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done**

Please provide any details and examples:

Not Applicable

**Question 5. Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2024-25 reporting period?**

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

**Answer: D No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done.**

Please provide any details and examples:

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

**Question 6. In the 2024-25 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?**

- A. Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- B. Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- C. Yes, in some departments/jobs
- D. No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's corporate plan
- E. No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2024-25 report
- F. Not applicable

**Answer: D No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's corporate plan**

Please provide any details and examples:

Not Applicable

**Equality action plans/measures**

**Question 7. Within the 2024-25 reporting period, please indicate the number of:**

Actions completed: 0

Actions ongoing: 2

Actions to commence: 0

Please provide any details and examples (in addition to question 2):

**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.

Campaigns, initiatives and strategies addressing food safety and health issues will give specific consideration of how best to reach this group while avoiding social stigma and blame. 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. An updated Disability Action Plan 2026-2030 will be developed and consulted on in late 2025.

### **Provision of Accessible Information Services**

The website has been redesigned to meet updated guidelines WCAG 2.1, with an Action plan put in place to resolve outstanding issues. New guidance was prepared and issued to authors on creating accessible reports.

Safefood's information, both written and web-based, was pro-actively developed in accessible formats 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.

### **Question 8. Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2024-25 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 in early 2023 for the period 2023-25. An updated audit of inequalities and a new S75 Equality Action Plan 2026-28 will be developed in Q4 of 2025.

### **Question 9. In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2024-25 reporting period, the following have been identified: (tick all that apply)**

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

**Answer A. Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality**

**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:**

- A. All the time
- B. Sometimes
- C. Never

**Answer: B. Sometimes**

**Question 11. Please provide any details and examples of good practice in consultation during the 2024-25 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 2024-25 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were most frequently used by consultees:**

- A. Face to face meetings - No
- B. Focus groups - No
- C. Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing - Yes
- D. Questionnaires - No
- E. Information by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation - No
- F. Internet discussions - No
- G. Telephone consultations - No
- H. Other (please specify) – No

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 2024-25 reporting period?**

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Not Applicable

**Answer: B. No**

Please provide any details and examples:

Not Applicable

**Question 14. Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2024-25 reporting period?**

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Not Applicable – no commitment to review

**Answer: B. No**

**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): Answer: 4**

Safefood Research Strategy 2024-2028: screened April 2024

Safefood draft Business Plan 2025: screened October 2024

The Community Fund Initiative 2025-2028: screened October 2024

N/SPS Pension Rule Amendments No.8 & No.9 Schemes: screened October 2024 by Safefood on behalf of the North South Pension Scheme CEO Committee.

**Question 16. Please provide the number of assessments that were consulted upon during 2024-25:**

- 0 Policy consultations conducted with **screening** assessment presented.
- 0 Policy consultations conducted **with an equality impact assessment** (EQIA) presented.
- 0 **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 2024-2025.

**Question 18. Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees?**

- A. Yes
- B. No concerns were raised
- C. No
- D. Not applicable

**Answer: D. 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 2024-25 reporting period?**

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Not Applicable

**Answer: C. 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 2024-25 reporting period?**

- A. Yes
- B. No, already taken place
- C. No, scheduled to take place at a later date
- D. Not Applicable

**Answer: D. Not Applicable**

Please provide any details:

Not Applicable

**Question 21. In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies?**

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Not Applicable

**Answer: C. 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 2024-25 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 2024-25, 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 Recruitment & Selection training seminar has been delivered to panel members, both internal and external panel members, in advance of any recruitment exercises completed during the period 2024-25. The seminar includes 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.

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) have developed an eLearning module to support and encourage staff in public bodies to understand equality and human rights concepts, principles and legislation, and build a shared understanding of equality and human rights in the public service, supporting better quality of services and a better work environment. HR staff have undertaken this e-learning module as part of refresher training on equality and human rights during 2024-25 and consideration is now being given to incorporating the eLearning module into Safefood's online training as part of its future staff induction process.

Safefood developed a webinar to provide refresher training to those staff involved in EQIA Screening of new policies and programmes. This refresher training was delivered to staff during 2024-25 with further cohorts of staff to receive training as required.

**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 2024-25, 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 2024-25?**

0 complaints received

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

No complaints were received during the reporting period 2024-2025.

### 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 2018-2022. As part of the 5-year review an Audit of Inequalities was undertaken and a s75 Action Plan 2023-25 was developed.

The next 5-year review of the Equality Scheme covering the period 2023-2027 will be completed in the first quarter of 2028.

**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?**

As Safefood continues to find low levels of consultation by consultees, citing limited resources as a reason for not participating or responding to consultation exercises, Safefood will focus on looking at alternative consultations methods as a means to encourage increased levels of consultation by consultees.

**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?**

- A. Employment - No
- B. Goods, facilities and services - No
- C. Legislative changes - No
- D. Organisational changes/ new functions - No
- E. Nothing specific, more of the same - Yes
- F. Other (please state): - No

## PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

1. Number of action measures for this reporting period that have been:

Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved
0	11	0

2. Please outline below details 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	Outcomes / Impact
National			
Regional			
Local			

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

No.	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact

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

No.	Communication Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact

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

No.	Encourage Others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact

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

No.	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcome / Impact

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

No.	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones/ Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	Ensure all staff and Advisory Board members receive disability equality legislation and disability awareness training	e-learning courses have been delivered on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diversity &amp; Inclusion in the workplace</li> <li>- Unconscious bias in the workplace</li> <li>- Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing in the workplace.</li> </ul> These are included in staff and Board member inductions.	All staff and board members have an awareness of disability and an understanding of disability legislations	Ongoing -HR to identify any further suitable e-learning training resources and roll these out to staff and Board members
2	Ensure all new staff and Advisory Board Members receive disability equality legislation and disability awareness training within 3 months of start date	All new staff and board members have an awareness of disability and an understanding of disability legislations	All new staff and office holders receive training within 3 months of start date	Ongoing – All new staff and office holders receive training within 3 months of start date

3	<p>Ensure staff and external members involved in recruitment and selection panels are provided with appropriate training in disability awareness</p>	<p>Where required, recruitment and selection panels receive appropriate training in advance of panel meeting</p> <p>Training delivered to those panel members involved in recruitment &amp; selection panels during the period 2024-25</p>	<p>Members of recruitment and selection panels have an awareness and understanding of the key disability issues</p>	<p>Ongoing – A bespoke Recruitment &amp; Selection training webinar delivered to panel members where required in advance of selection / interview process</p> <p>HR maintains a database of suitably trained staff and consultants</p>
4	<p>Provide advice and support to staff and Advisory Board members on wellbeing and promote wellbeing initiatives</p>	<p>Wellbeing programme and awareness of wellbeing issues enhanced within Safefood</p>	<p>Emotional health and wellbeing awareness among staff and to assist with wellbeing amongst teams</p>	<p>Ongoing - EAP Programme and Spectrum Wellbeing resource available to all staff</p> <p>Awareness e-mails circulated periodically as part of induction and to all staff during 2024-25 promoting access to Spectrum Wellbeing resources</p>

5	Continue to assess and improve accessibility of website and other communication materials	Ensure website continues to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 Checklist (WCAG 2.0) and publish an accessibility statement	Ensure that the website is accessible for all users	Ongoing - Website redesigned to meet updated guidelines WCAG 2.1.  Ongoing - Action plan in place to resolve outstanding issues
6	Promote the Disability Action Plan 2021-2025 through internal communication channels such as the intranet and by email	DAP published on Staff Intranet (Yammer)  DAP issued to Adv. Board  DAP issued to all new starts	All staff are aware of the planned disability action measures and ensure they are on target	On-going - Progress on delivery of the Disability Action Plan a regular agenda item at meetings of the Senior Management Team  Ongoing - DAP 2021-2025 is issued to all new starts as part of their HR induction programme
7	Promote a positive image of disabled people	Relevant articles, Case Studies and/or images to be included in promotional material where appropriate	Help to promote a positive image of disabled people and make promotional material more inclusive	Ongoing - research contracts include a clause encouraging the Contractor to emphasise inclusion of disabled people in public fora e.g. consumer focus groups, consultation groups or other educational or science working groupings

8	Ensure that all Safefood events meet the needs of disabled people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All event locations have disability access</li><li>• Presentations and event literature to be made available in alternative formats upon request</li><li>• Signage at events to be visible and clear</li><li>• Venues to have suitable parking/public transport access</li><li>• Consider the use of registered interpreters where appropriate</li></ul>	Ensure that Safefood co-ordinated events are accessible for disabled people	Ongoing - as events are planned and organised:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Event locations are researched and chosen to ensure they have disability access. Signage at events created to ensure it is visible and clear.</li><li>- Future event registration pages will be edited to ensure the need for materials in alternative formats is established.</li></ul>
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9	Provide details of open recruitment competitions to relevant disability agencies and consider all requests for reasonable adjustments as part of the selection process	<p>Reasonable adjustments requested provided</p> <p>All jobs being recruited during the period 2024-25 were notified to Disability Federation Ireland and Disability Action NI for wider circulation</p>	Ensure that no applicant will be disadvantaged due to disability during any recruitment competition	Ongoing for all recruitment competitions
10	Provide information to staff of national disability awareness days and promote staff participation	Inclusion of information on awareness days on internal intranet	Raise awareness and visibility of disability issues amongst all staff and board members	Ongoing - HR monitors Disability Federation Ireland and Disability Action NI websites to identify appropriate awareness days to promote staff participation
11	Provide ongoing advice and support to staff in relation to reasonable work adjustment requirements	Record the number of reasonable work adjustment requests made by staff and any adjustments made to meet these requests	Meet, where appropriate, reasonable work adjustments to allow disabled staff to fully participate in employment	Ongoing -Advice and support provided by Safefood's HR function where appropriate

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

No	Action Measures Not Met	Reasons

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

Answer: Focus Groups / Face-to-Face Meetings / Online Meetings

(b) Quantitative

Answer Surveys / Monitoring data

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

(a) made any revisions to your plan during the reporting period or

(b) taken any additional steps to meet the disability duties which were not outlined in your original disability action plan / any other changes?

Answer: No

If yes please outline below:

Answer: Not Applicable

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?

Answer: No