

**ANNUAL REVIEW OF PROGRESS 2005-2006**  
**TO THE**  
**EQUALITY COMMISSION**  
**ON**  
**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EQUALITY AND GOOD**  
**RELATIONS DUTIES UNDER SECTION 75 OF THE NORTHERN**  
**IRELAND ACT 1998**

**BY THE**



**July 2006**

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

An objective in the Agency's Business Plan for 2005/2006 was "to ensure the effective promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations in all policies and practices." In addition to training in equality awareness and specific focused training, training was also provided in the Agency's recruitment and selection processes. Procedures were also put in place to ensure transparency and consistency across all positions and specialties in relation to the appointment of staff required to act on behalf of the Agency. The Agency's good relations objective for 2006-07 is to "create a culture which encourages innovation and excellence and provides an harmonious and safe working environment"

The Agency continues to work in close partnership with colleagues from the HPSS Agencies and Special Bodies consortium on equality.

During 2005-2006, the Agency contributed £7,225 to the cost of the CSA Equality Unit, which is tasked with providing specialist support and advice on equality. The Unit provides equality services to 10 HPSS Agencies and Special Bodies. The funds provide for 2.5 WTE posts as well as non-pay expenditure, for instance to procure external training services or to cover costs for printing information leaflets on equality issues. The Agency spent an additional £750 on advertising (public notices) in the context of an EQIA consultation.

## **Section 2: Screening & Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)**

The EQIA on recruitment of trainees for Dental Vocational Training (VT) and Dental General Professional Training (GPT), commenced in 2004/2005, was progressed to the consultation stage. A three-month consultation exercise was carried out. As the Agency received only few comments, NIMDTA decided to extend the period for another three months. Trainees and trainers all received a copy of the consultation document and were invited to provide comments.

Eight new and revised policies were screened during 2005/06

(Appendix A).

Finally, a procedure has been put in place to ensure that policies subjected to screening by the Agency will be consulted on. A timetable for joint consultation exercises on the outcome of screening activities in cooperation with consortium partners has been devised.

NIMDTA did not initiate any new EQIAs during the financial year nor have any further policies been 'screened in' for EQIA in the future.

Work was progressed to establish systems for monitoring applications for work-life balance schemes, which had been subjected to EQIA in 2002/2003. New application forms were designed.

### **Section 3: Training**

As in previous years, the Agency and its consortium partners developed a comprehensive training plan for the year. It comprised equality awareness sessions (for all staff) plus additional, specialised training for particular groups of NIMDTA staff on specific aspects of equality scheme implementation, including screening and EQIAs.

The following sessions were delivered, open to staff from all consortium organisations:

- 1 equality awareness training  
23 sessions were delivered; 13 members of NIMDTA staff attended
- 2 disability awareness training  
eight sessions were delivered; 13 members of NIMDTA staff attended
- 3 anti-racism training  
one session was delivered; one member of NIMDTA staff attended
- 4 screening training  
six sessions were delivered; two members of NIMDTA staff attended.

A training session on EQIAs was also delivered to consortium staff, yet no members of NIMDTA staff attended as no new EQIAs have been scheduled by the Agency.

All training sessions are evaluated on a regular basis. Participants are asked to fill in evaluation forms. All returns are reviewed and directly inform revisions of the content and methodology of the training session to ensure its continuous improvement.

Evaluation questions cover the extent to which the course has met its aims, personal learning, timing of the session's components as well as the usefulness of examples and case studies chosen.

With regards to specialist training (such as screening and EQIAs), participants tend to be more confident about the knowledge they have accrued rather than the practical skills they have acquired as an outcome of the training sessions. This is commonly ascribed to the complexity of the tasks involved in equality proofing. Participants often emphasise the need for ongoing advice and support by specialist staff as they embark on applying their learning to the screening of new or revised policies/decisions.

#### **Section 4: Communication**

The Agency provides a detailed account of progress in relation to its delivery on action points emanating from the EQIAs it has conducted (see Appendix B). This forms part of the annual review of progress.

As a result of the Five Year Review of its Equality Scheme, NIMDTA has decided that it will publish this account as a stand-alone document in future.

With regards to communication within the Agency, the five-year review has served to update staff on progress in relation to implementing Section 75.

#### **Section 5: Data Collection & Analysis**

The Agency piloted a new employment monitoring form. The form, which was developed on the basis of good practice and with the input

of several voluntary sector organisations, was endorsed by the Equality Commission. It collects data on seven of the nine groups under Section 75 (with the exception of sexual orientation and political opinion). To capture the data, an additional database was designed.

The evaluation of the pilot highlighted a need for streamlining the question on religion and community affiliation. Separate questions on (1) a person's community background and (2) their specific religious belief proved ineffective.

Barriers to mainstreaming the new monitoring forms emerged in the course of the year with the development of HPSS online recruitment. Despite strong objections voiced by various organisations and regional networks, the respective working group has adopted a standardised form which monitors only a rudimentary set of categories under Section 75 groups.

In the area of service monitoring, the Agency worked with colleagues from Deaneries across the UK to ensure that graduates applying for the new 2-year Foundation Training in Northern Ireland fill in a comprehensive monitoring form.

## **Section 6: Information Provision, Access to Information and Services**

The Agency is represented by the Equality Unit on the regional 'Accessible Formats Working Group', which brings together communication and equality staff from across the HPSS. During the year, the group delivered on its objective to identify a set of best-value providers of translation services via a tendering process. The resulting regional contract for translation services was launched on 31 March 2006. The purpose of the contract is to ensure that all translations procured meet certain quality standards.

Moreover, the working group has taken forward a regional initiative to produce an information resource for migrant workers and their dependents on health and social services in Northern Ireland. After consulting with HPSS colleagues, a consultation exercise with black and minority ethnic (BME) groups was initiated which is due to finish

in June 2006. The booklet includes information on how to register with the HPSS and will be of particular value to overseas doctors and their dependents, who are a key group of NIMDTA service users.

## **Section 7: Complaints**

The Agency did not receive any complaints under the terms of Section 75 during the year. If any complaints are received under Section 75, they are directed to the Agency's Complaints Manager, who reports and monitors the level of complaints on an annual basis.

## **Section 8: Scheme Timetable**

No further changes have occurred since the Agency's previous report.

The Agency continues to acknowledge the lack of progress regarding the design of a Good Relations action plan but would point to its joint efforts – alongside its consortium partners – focusing on educational activities (see Section 10 below) until further guidance by the Commission is available.

## **Section 9: Consultation, Participation and Engagement**

The EQIA consultation primarily targeted those who had engaged with the Agency during the data collection stage: trainers and trainees. They were provided with the draft EQIA report and invited to comment, given the difficulties of recruiting volunteers for focus groups in the past. In addition, key details in relation to the consultation were sent via email to all organisations on NIMDTA's consultation list. They were also supplied with a pro forma for responding to the consultation.

The Agency and its consortium partners would by now liaise with voluntary sector organisations in the field on a routine basis whenever a need for further information on individual Section 75 groups is identified. Thus, for instance, RNID was contacted for further advice regarding an update on the use of textphones vis-à-vis other communication technologies by people with hearing

impairments.

## **Section 10: The Good Relations Duty**

The HPSS Agencies and Special Bodies commissioned a further training session on anti-racism, delivered by Concept Eleven to staff from across the consortium organisations. The training employed a novel approach; it was highly interactive, using Northern Irish media footage to examine majority perceptions of minority groupings and lines of argumentation used in relation to these. The focus of the session then shifted to perceptions and attitudes of participants themselves.

Participants experienced the training as personally challenging. Some assessed this positively, others felt uncomfortable with the directness of the approach. Further discussions following the pilot sessions resulted in a review of the specification for any future anti-racism training.

The consortium has continued to explore the opportunities provided by e-learning. It plays an active role on a regional, HPSS-wide initiative to produce an e-learning resource on diversity. The initiative is taken forward by a working group with representatives from a range of Boards, Trusts, and Agencies/Special Bodies. Work on the resource has been progressed significantly with the engagement of John Kremer, a psychologist from Queen's University Belfast. At the end of the financial year, a first draft of the content had been produced.

In addition to these initiatives, the consortium reviewed the new strategic framework 'A Shared Future'.

## **Section 11: Additional Comments on Mainstreaming**

In addition to the work outlined above, the Agency and its partners developed several good practice initiatives. For one, a welcome pack for new staff and doctors from outside Northern Ireland was produced. Likewise, a checklist for the induction of staff from outside Northern Ireland was drafted.

Finally, the Equality Unit on behalf of the consortium and in collaboration with the Western Equality and Human Rights Office developed a resource for staff tasked with undertaking Equality Impact Assessments. The guide ('The Easy Way to EQIA') provides practical tips for EQIAs, short and jargon-free.

The experience over the past five years has shown that a range of factors determine whether or not efforts to mainstream equality within organisations are successful. Herein, a consistency of approach across designated bodies plays a vital role. This consistency, however, is fundamentally lacking.

The most recent decisions in the Review of Public Administration (focusing in on Northern Ireland QUANGOs), taken by the Secretary of State in March 2006, serve as a case in point. The decisions involve the abolition of a considerable number of public authorities with clearly significant equality implications for staff. Yet no documentation is available from OFMDFM to evidence consideration of these in the March decisions. Neither did OFMDFM conduct a consultation exercise on these particular decisions and the outcome of the respective screening process as required under Section 75.

A lack of screening at the highest levels of decision-making fundamentally undermines any local efforts to convince staff of the need to mainstream equality in organisational decision-making.

The Equality Commission could play a key role in achieving a greater consistency by:

- (1) producing more detailed guidance on screening, including a model screening policy/procedure and further advice on consultation/engagement throughout the process and
- (2) enforcing the statutory equality duties in relation to screening and EQIAs by closer scrutiny of processes as well as outcomes, and giving particular attention to decision-making vis-à-vis formal policy-making (in line with the wide definition of 'policy' employed by the Commission).

## Section 12: Concluding Questions

12A) Does the authority believe its work on implementing the statutory duties during 2005-06 produced positive benefits for the organisation? **YES X** if yes please complete the following

**No**

	Very noticeably	Noticeably	No real change
i) Increased awareness of equality issues in policy making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii) Increased ability to ensure policies are designed and targeted to reflect equal opportunities objectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii) Increased awareness of good relations issues in policy making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv) Increased ability to ensure policies are designed and targeted to reflect good relations objectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
v) Increased awareness of equality issues in service delivery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
vi) Increased ability to ensure services are designed and targeted to reflect Section 75 requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**12B )** Does the authority believe its work on implementing the statutory duties during 2005-06 produced positive benefits for groups within the Section 75 categories?

**YES X** if yes please complete the following

**No**

	<b>Very noticeably</b>	<b>Noticeably</b>	<b>No real change</b>
Persons of different religious belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>X</b>
Persons of different political opinion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>X</b>
Persons of different racial groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>X</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Persons of different age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>X</b>
Persons with different marital status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>X</b>
Persons of different sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>X</b>
Men and women generally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>X</b>
Persons with and without a disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>X</b>
Persons with and without dependents	<input type="checkbox"/>		<b>X</b>

NIMDTA would argue that it will take some time for the range of actions taken during 2005/2006 to achieve real benefits for groups under Section 75.

## QUESTION 12C

If you answered yes to QUESTION 12 B, for each of the categories where a noticeable or very noticeable change has occurred, please give examples of those changes to policies or practices which have resulted in positive change. If the change was a result of an EQIA please tick the appropriate box in column 3:

	Policy or Practice	Tick if result of EQIA
Persons of different religious belief	•	
Persons of different political opinion	•	
Persons of different racial groups	• welcome pack for staff and doctors from outside NI	no
Persons of different age	•	
Persons with different marital status	•	
Persons of different sexual orientation	•	
Men and women generally	•	
Persons with and without a disability	•	
Persons with and without dependents	•	

## Appendix A

## Screening & EQIA Update

### *i) EQIA Timetable – 2005-06*

Title of policy EQIA underway during April 2005- March 2006	Stage (as per Steps 1-7 of EQIA Process)  As at end March 2006	If joint-EQIA please state partner authorities	Outline any adjustments to policy intended to benefit individuals from the nine equality categories and outline the relevant categories affected.	Were adjustments made to policy? <u>Assess</u> adverse impacts  feedback <u>Consu</u> E  Please e E
1. Recruitment of Trainees for Dental Vocational Training (VT) and Dental General Professional Training (GPT)	5			

### *ii) Ongoing Screening Activities 2005-06*

Title of policy subject to screening during April 2005- March 2006	If joint policy please state partner authorities	Was initial screening decision changed following consultation? <u>Yes/No</u>	If Screening completed being subject to EQIA?
1. Whistle Blowing Policy		No	No
2. Fire Safety Policy		No	No
3. Complaints Procedure		No	No
4. Major Incident Policy		No	No
5. Business Continuity Plan		No	No
6. Standing Financial Instructions		No	No

7. Records Management Strategy		No	No
8. Communications Strategy		No	No

***iii) Ongoing EQIA Monitoring Activities 2005-06***

<p align="center"><b>Title of EQIA subject to Stage 7 monitoring during April 2005- March 2006</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>If joint policy please state partner authorities</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Indicate if differential impacts previously identified have reduced or increased</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Indica previ rec</b></p>
<p>1. Flexible Working Policies</p> <p>NB: work has been progressed to develop monitoring systems (see Section 2)</p>	<p>Blood Transfusion Service; Health Promotion Agency; NI Regional Medical Physics Agency; NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency; NI Medical and Dental Training Agency</p>		
<p>2. Appointment of Staff to Act on Behalf of the Agency</p>			
<p>3. General Dental Policies</p>			
<p>4. General Practice Policies</p>			
<p>5. Specialist Registrar Policies</p>			

**iv) 2006-07 EQIA Time-table**

**n/a**

<b>Title of EQIAs due to be commenced during April 2006 – March 2007</b>	<b>Existing or New policy?  Please enter E or N below.</b>	<b>If joint-EQIA please state partner authorities</b>	<b>Please date of Stage</b>
1.			
2.			

**Appendix B: Progress on Delivery of EQIA Action Points**

- **(1) EQIA on ‘Work-Life Balance Policies’ (jointly with other HPSS Agencies and Bodies)**

Action Point (1):

- initiatives to raise awareness of policies across organisations

Progress:

- no further progress

Action Points (2) and (3):

- collaborative work between organisations to identify and share Good Practice as well as pitfalls regarding individual policies
- develop a flagship project to showcase benefits of work-life balance

Progress:

- implemented

Action Point (4):

- introduction of a formal monitoring system for measuring applications for and uptake of work-life

balance policies by S75 categories

Progress:

- NIMDTA carried out a pilot using the new template in recruitment monitoring; the evaluation of the pilot highlighted a need for streamlining the question on religion and community affiliation
- a new application form for WLB policies was drafted and piloted for term-time working in one of the partner agencies

Action Point (5):

- review of working arrangements and hours for all grades of staff

Progress:

- completed in the context of 'Agenda for Change'
- **(2) EQIA on "Appointment of Staff to Act on Behalf of the Agency (Specialty Advisers, Training Programme Directors, Tutors, Course Organisers)"**

(1) To widen the application of existing appointment procedures and practices to ensure an open, transparent and consistent appointment process across all positions and specialties, taking account of the particular circumstances of smaller specialties. The Agency will make those exceptional circumstances public.

- *Progress:*
  - 1 *an audit of current appointment procedures specialty by specialty has been completed*
  - 2 *good practice for policies and procedures has been identified and issued*
- (2) To recruit on a fixed-term basis where it is considered to be appropriate.

- *Progress:*

*3 new employment legislation on fixed-term appointments poses constraints on issuing fixed-term contracts*

(3) To ensure that documentation is available for all positions regarding:

- a) job descriptions
- b) personnel specifications
- c) terms and conditions (including the number of sessions).

- This will be undertaken in consultation with the Royal Colleges, the BMA and the BDA. Particular emphasis will be given to examining the equality impacts of any of these, in particular in relation to the groups currently under-represented. The Agency commits itself to applying new guidance on 'The 5 C's of Information Provision' in all their applications.

- *Progress:*

*4 an audit of existing job descriptions, personnel specifications, T&Cs has been carried out*

*5 all documentation has been reviewed and updated*

- (4) In putting together interview panels, the Agency will encourage individuals from under-represented groups to become involved.

- *Progress:*

*6 a prompt has been integrated into information materials to Training Committees*

- (5) To draft a communication strategy, i.e. a policy on the dissemination of information, outlining procedures for advertising positions (e.g. through HPSS-wide job trawls) and disseminating written information on positions (i.e. job descriptions, personnel specifications, terms and

conditions) to all existing and new doctors.

- *Progress:*

*7 new proposals for policies and procedures have been drafted and submitted to the NIMDTA Board*

- (6) To seek to produce a Code of Practice for the appointment of medical and dental practitioners to become members of Specialty Training Committees.

- *Progress:*

*8 new proposals for policies and procedures have been drafted and submitted to the NIMDTA Board*

- (7) To encourage Committees to explore the viability of introducing the use of videoconferencing facilities and rotating the venue of meetings. Agency will provide Committees with advice and guidance on range of locations and venues available, esp. outside of Belfast. Agency will encourage Committees varying meeting times and considering availability of childcare wherever possible.

- *Progress:*

*9 an audit of current arrangements has been carried out*

*10 option of videoconferencing will be kept under review along with technological progress; currently two options (1) ISDN (2) fibre-optic link – both are cost-intensive*

- (8) Equality data on seven of the nine groups will be collected at the application stage in order to allow for ongoing monitoring in compliance with provisions under the Data Protection Act.

- *Progress:*

*11 data collection has been commenced*

- (9) To publish summary monitoring data on an annual basis to provide greater transparency as to applicants and

appointees.

- *Progress:*

*12 no progress to date*

- (10) To include a statement in future advertisements that NIMDTA is an equal opportunities employer (spelling out all nine groups) and that applications from the under-represented groups will be particularly welcome.

- *Progress:*

*13 implemented in full*

- (11) To seek to further develop its engagement with organisations representing the interests of Section 75 groups, in particular with regards to exploring potential barriers and ways of addressing them.

- *Progress:*

*14 ongoing*

- (12) To introduce both equality awareness training and induction training for those working on its behalf and to distribute information materials on equality to staff.

- *Progress:*

*15 training programme has been developed and individuals have been encouraged to attend*

- (13) To continue to lobby the DHSSPS for supporting the collection of quantitative monitoring data on all GPs, GDPs and hospital consultants.

- *No further progress*

- **(3) EQIA on 'General Dental Practice Policies'**

Action Point (1):

- monitoring of trainer applicant data
- annual monitoring of trainer data (eligible and active trainers) for age, gender, religion, marital status, dependents, ethnicity, disability; publication on the website
- publication of summary statistics on applicants on the website
- Progress
  - a monitoring template was developed on the basis of current good practice across public sector organisations and in consultation with selected voluntary sector organisations
  - the Equality Commission has approved the template
  - a pilot has been initiated; after the completion of a pilot in 2005-2006, the Agency will explore the scope for employing the template on a wider scale
  - names and location of practices have been published; summary statistics to be published after approval and subsequent introduction of new template

Action Point (2):

- explore scope for collecting monitoring data for all GDPs
- Progress
  - no further progress since 2003-2004

Action Point (3):

- explore feasibility of piloting video-conferencing facilities
- Progress

- no further progress

- **(4) EQIA on 'General Practice Policies'**

Action Point (1):

- publish details on how to become a trainer and retainer supervisor on website; clarify information regarding the eligibility of part-time GPs

Progress

- information is available from the Agency's website.

Action Point (2):

- annual monitoring of trainer data (eligible and active trainers) for age, gender, religion, marital status, dependents, ethnicity, disability; publication on the website

Progress

- a monitoring template was developed on the basis of current good practice across public sector organisations and in consultation with selected voluntary sector organisations
- the Equality Commission has approved the template
- a pilot has been initiated; after the completion of a pilot in 2005-2006, the Agency will explore the scope for employing the template on a wider scale

Action Point (3):

- explore scope for collecting monitoring data for all GPs

Progress

- no further progress since 2003-2004

- **(5) EQIA on ‘Specialist Registrar Policies’**

Action Point (1):

- exploring scope for organising induction event by specialty

Progress

- Individual specialties are now providing induction programmes.

Action Point (2):

- include welcome statement for applications from women and members from black and minority ethnic groups for Supernumerary SpR scheme in information provided

Progress

- implemented fully

Action Point (3):

- ensure greater transparency of placement process

Progress

- individual needs of trainees in relation to placements are now sought and decisions are made based on evidence from trainees.

Action Point (4):

- monitoring applications for flexible training scheme and supernumerary scheme

Progress

- a monitoring template was developed on the basis of current good practice across public sector organisations and in consultation with selected

voluntary sector organisations

- the Equality Commission has approved the template
- a pilot has been initiated; after the completion of a pilot in 2005-2006, the Agency will explore the scope for employing the template on a wider scale