



# **Eastern Health And Social Services Council**

## **Section 75 Northern Ireland Act 1998**

### **Progress Report**

**1 April 2004 To March 2005**

**March 2005**

## **Contents**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1.0 Strategic Implementation of the S75 Equality Duties</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.0 Screening &amp; Equality impact Assessment (EQIA) Timetable</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3.0 Training</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4.0 Communication</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5.0 Data Collection &amp; Analysis</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6.0 Information Provision and Access to Services</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>7.0 Complaints</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>8.0 Timetable</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>9.0 Consultation</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>10.0 The Good Relations Duty</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>11.0 Impacts and outcomes</b>	<b>10</b>

## **1.0 Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Duties**

In 2004 the four Health and Social Services Councils produced a joint three year Work Programme which includes Equality, Human Rights and Targeting New Social Need objectives. This programme was circulated to all Council Members and staff and is also available on the Council's website.

Written quarterly progress reports of the Eastern Council's Work Programme and activities are produced and circulated. This includes updates on key obligations such as Freedom of Information, Human Rights and Equality. The Council also submitted an update on its Equality Scheme in August 2004 to the Equality Commission.

A Senior Manager has the responsibility to take the lead in the Equality agenda and all job descriptions are revised on an annual basis ensuring that S75 obligations are included. These job descriptions are then reviewed yearly at staff performance appraisals. All staff have received equality training and have had specific updates in the last year on:

- Good Relations
- Disability Discrimination Act

The Council's has 30 Council members who act in an unpaid capacity; they also have received training and regular updates on the statutory Equality duties.

The Equality obligation is high on the agenda within Council and progress of the scheme is reported at team meetings and Council meetings and discussed with the other Health and Social Services Councils on a regular basis. The Council's yearly progress reports on the Equality Scheme and feedback reports are available for members and staff.

As a member of the Eastern Area Equality Best Practice Group the Council meets on a bi-monthly basis with all parties to share learning and agree on the best way forward. There are some members of that group who sit on the Regional Equality Steering Group; information is disseminated to all members of the Eastern Area Equality Best Practice Group. In the past year the Eastern Area Equality Best Practice Group have completed projects such as a video for those with Learning Disabilities and the establishment of a 'Diversity Website'. The group also defined and launched an Eastern area statement in the promotion of Good Relations which has been adopted by all group members.

The Council is also involved at a regional level with all health, social services and public safety organisations in the sharing of information and regional programme of Equality Impact Assessments.

## **2.0 Screening and Equality Impact Assessment Timetable**

The Council as part of the family of public bodies in Health, Social Services and Public Safety has been involved in the regional programme of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) and Good Practice Reviews.

## **3.0 Training & Recruitment**

New members of staff receive Equality training ranging from general awareness to specialist training on EQIA's, screening and consultation depending upon the level of staff. This training has been arranged jointly with the Eastern Area Good Practice Group.

Existing council staff receive, yearly updates in Equality issues through attendance at the Corporate Training held in the Eastern Health and Social Services Board.

A Senior Manager attended the Equality Commission's conference on Sexual Orientation Legislation in December 2004 and fed back to senior management on key issues.

Training opportunities are highlighted to Council Members and staff

The Council carries out its recruitment with due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity.

#### **4.0 Communication**

Every opportunity is taken to promote and communicate the Council's Equality objectives in public statements, on the web site, interviews, responses to consultation documents and representing the public interest on committees and working groups. This was further enhanced in the Council's launch of its statement on Good Relations (see subsequent section)

The Equality objectives are communicated at all levels within the Council from staff meetings through to Council meetings. The objectives are included in quarterly progress reports of the Council Work Programme and through the Council's Annual report.

#### **5.0 Data Collection & Analysis**

The Council regularly undertakes satisfaction surveys and monitors different issues of public interest in the Health and Social Services.

During any consultation process the Council endeavours to seek the views of the users of the service using a variety of methods including questionnaires or focus groups. The views of those consulted with, are included in all Council responses.

The Council routinely collects data of the service users who contact the Council to avail of our services or who are involved in any aspect of the

research projects. This data includes locality, gender, persons with dependants and persons with a disability.

## **6.0 Information Provision and Access to Services**

The Council's approved Equality scheme has been circulated to all members and staff. The scheme is available to any group, organisation or person free of charge. We provide different formats on request including the following:

- On audiotape
- By email
- In larger print
- In other languages
- On disk and
- In Braille

The Council's Equality scheme, minutes of Council's monthly public meetings and research reports conducted by the Council can be downloaded from the website, [www.ehssc.org](http://www.ehssc.org). The Council's website has an interactive page making the Council more accessible to the community. The Council's website also includes a children's section. It has also been constructed following the 'Bobby Test' principles.

The Council meetings are held throughout the Eastern Board area in publicly accessible venues. Times are rotated to facilitate public attendance. Notices of our meetings are circulated to 300+ community and voluntary groups and there is an agenda item, which permits issues to be raised by members of the public. When planning events participants are invited to indicate any particular requirements in relation to communication, mobility or transport and diet. All of the Council meetings are held in buildings that are compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act.

## **7.0 Complaints**

The Council has received one complaint under Section 75 during the period covered by this report. The complaint was in relation to the Council support of the Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum calendar for 2005. In addition to formally replying to the complaint the Council fed the comments to the Inter Faith Forum who will proactively engage the complainant to address his concerns.

The Council has assisted individuals to make complaints to other organisations within this category. In terms of the Council's role in assisting complainants through the complaints procedure the Senior Managers are kept updated as to what a complainant's rights are in relation to S75 obligations and will advise them accordingly.

## **8.0 Timetable**

The timetable contained in our Equality Scheme is regularly reviewed to monitor progress. This is reported on a quarterly basis to the Council Members and staff. It is also reviewed in conjunction with the other Health and Social Services Councils.

## **9.0 Consultation**

The Council in its response to consultation documents, new policy and research projects, regularly conducts consultation exercises being inclusive of the 9 categories.

Methods of consultation have varied from large public meetings to small steering groups and one to one interviews.

This year the Council conducted several group discussions both rural and urban in the Eastern Area in relation to the new out of hours arrangements implemented from the new General Medical Services Contract. The Council has expressed those views to the Eastern Health and Social Services Board.

The Council also set-up a steering group for the research project into the Palliative Care Services within the Eastern Area. This group consists of service users, service providers and commissioner.

When planning any of the events, the Council will invite participants to indicate any particular requirements in relation to communication, mobility or transport.

## **10.0 The Good Relations Duty**

The Council is committed to its obligations of Good Relations under Section 75. All staff had training on Good Relations in the period of this report.

The Council as a member of the Eastern Area Equality Best Practice Area demonstrated its commitment to Good Relations with a statement launched as part of Community Relations Week in March.

The statement is as follows:

“The Eastern Health and Social Services Council is committed to the promotion of good relations between people of differing religious belief, political opinion or racial group. As a health and social services organisation we are committed to promoting respect for diversity and to challenging sectarianism and racism in both employment and services.”

Promoting good relations between political and religious groups is ongoing in the daily work of the Council staff. Interview panels for Council staff are not biased towards any section of the community.

The promotion of good relations in the workplace is on a daily basis. All members of staff have attended 'Religious Diversity in the Workplace' training that will help to increase staff awareness in recognising and responding to the needs of our clients and also to each other.

Through our facilitation of various focus groups, public meetings and user participation, the Council promotes good relations by ensuring each member of the community who attends, is given an equal opportunity to express their views and opinions without being biased to any.

Council members consist of people from various sections of the community.

### **11.0 Liaison with Voluntary and Community**

The four Health and Social Services Councils undertook a consultation on their Liaison with the Voluntary and Community sector with a view to improving interaction and engagement and developing a policy on this. The four councils aim was to engage rural and urban service users regarding their policy on user involvement and follow on from the Good Practice Review. An independent organisational consultant was employed to carry out the work.

The consultation involved;

- A number of focus groups with the voluntary and community sector.
- The production of a report and statement on the Councils' liaison with the community and voluntary sector (enclosed)
- A meeting with voluntary and community sector representatives to discuss the report and the way forward.

As a result of the report and subsequent engagement with voluntary and community sector representatives a working group has now been established to develop a participative approach to the Council engaging the community at large.

In addition to the consultation process outlined the Eastern Health and Social Services Council has also developed a positive relationship with the Chinese Welfare Association. The Council in partnership with the EHSSB has supported the Association in the piloting of an advocacy service for the Chinese Community to maximise equality of access and equity of treatment for service users. The Council will be supporting the project through close co-operation, skill sharing and a financial commitment. In addition the four Councils will be pursuing the establishment of a “Health and Social services Chinese Users Forum”.

## **12.0 Impacts and outcomes**

The Council, as a small organisation, do not devise new policies very often. However any new policies will be assessed to ensure that they comply with our statutory Equality duty.

The Council fully accepts its responsibility under the S75 legislation. To facilitate this we have worked collaboratively with many organisations both statutory and voluntary, in a number of initiatives.

We will continue to provide assistance, guidance and support to a number of organisations in developing public involvement initiatives within the Health and Social Services.