

Department of Health

Equality Action Plan

Disability Action Plan

(2018-2023)

Consultation Document

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Under Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 the Department of Health is required to submit an Equality Scheme, a statement of the Department's commitment to fulfilling its Section 75 statutory duties, to the Equality Commission. In order to demonstrate that the Department has paid due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations, it was recommended that action measures should be developed. These action measures are recorded in the format of an 'Equality Action Plan'.
- 1.2 The current Equality Action Plan (2012)¹ has been subject to change in light of further audit and research findings over the life of the Equality Scheme. It is now time to review the Equality Action Plan and, in accordance with Equality Commission NI best practice, we have carried out an Audit of Inequalities to inform the development of the plan.
- 1.3 In addition to the Equality Action Plan, this consultation period also provides an opportunity for the Department to review their Disability Action Plan (2012). The action measures from the current Disability Action Plan have been extended until the end of the March 2018.² The Disability Action Plan demonstrates how the Department, when carrying out their functions, must have due regard to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life.
- 1.4 This consultation document reports the outcome of the Audit of Inequalities conducted by the Department and the proposed Equality Action Plan and Disability Action Plan for implementation in 2018.

¹ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/equality-scheme-department-health-social-services-and-public-safety>; <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/equality-action-plan-doh>

² <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/doh-disability-action-plan-extended.pdf>

- 1.5 ***Pending the appointment of a Minister, the Department will work towards delivery of the targets specified in the Plans and within the limits of the financial and other resources allocated to the Department. Plans will be updated as new priorities and targets are approved by a new Minister and Executive.***
- 1.6 We would welcome your comments on both plans. When responding please indicate whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. A questionnaire pro-forma for responses has been provided on the website and will be automatically submitted, however you may also print the form, or submit a response in any format, by email to equality@health-ni.gov.uk or by posting to:

Equality and Human Rights Unit
Department of Health
Room D3
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST
BT4 3SQ

Telephone: 028 9052 0537

E-mail: equality@health-ni.gov.uk

- 1.7 A hard copy of the consultation document, or a copy in a different format, can be provided on request. There are also text relay services available if required, see below:

Making a call from a textphone: Dial 18001 + 028 90 520537

Making a call from a telephone: Dial 18002 + 028 90 520537

Text Relay Assist can also set up the call for you – dial 0870 240 51 52 from a telephone.

1.8 The consultation will close on **WEDNESDAY 28 FEBRUARY 2018**. Responses received after this date will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and with prior agreement from the Department.

2. BACKGROUND

Equality Action Plan

2.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act)³ requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories as outlined below:

Section 75 (1):

In carrying out the functions as they relate to Northern Ireland there is a requirement to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

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

Section 75 (2):

In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, in carrying out the functions as they relate to Northern Ireland the Department is required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

2.2 The Equality Commission published guidance “Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: A Guide for Public Authorities”⁴ recommending that public authorities should undertake an audit of inequalities by examining their functions and how

³<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/47/section/75>

⁴<http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/S75GuideforPublicAuthoritiesApril2010.pdf>

these relate to the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. Specific actions to address the inequalities identified should then be set out in an action plan, and these actions should be linked to the corporate planning cycle. The Commission subsequently published “Advice to Public Authorities: Approaching an Audit of Inequalities” in March 2012.⁵

3. AUDIT OF INEQUALITY PROCESS

3.1 An audit of inequalities was conducted to identify inequalities, across the nine Section 75 categories relevant to the Department’s functions, which informed the development of an Equality Action Plan. The process involved gathering qualitative and quantitative information from a number of internal and external sources. Some examples are listed below:

- ECNI policy position relating to health inequalities (2015)
- ECNI Statement on Key Inequalities in NI (2007)
- Health & Social Care Emerging Themes Document Section 75 Groups
- Public Health Intelligence briefings
- Patient and Client Care Position Statements
- NI Health & Social Care Health Inequalities Regional Report 2016 and Health Survey 2015/16 (DoH Information Analysis Directorate)
- Belfast Trust Barriers to Health Migrant Health and Wellbeing.
- Belfast Trust: Making Communication Accessible
- DoH Disability Action Plan extended to March 2018
- Annual progress report to the Equality Commission on Section 75 and Disability duties
- Draft Programme for Government 2016-21.
- NI Census of Population

⁵ [Advice to Public Authorities: Approaching an 'Audit of Inequalities'](#)

- International conventions and reports e.g. Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women; Elimination of Racial Discrimination; and Rights with Persons with Disabilities.
- Research reports and information drawn from the Intranet e.g. Age UK, Carers UK, Marie Curie, Cancer Research, National Institute for Clinical Excellence, Royal College for Speech and Language Therapy, Refuge for Children & Women against Violence, news articles on health inequalities issues, Travellers Health Study.

3.2 The Department also engaged with a number of Section 75 stakeholders at an event organised by the Health & Social Care Trusts on 19 January 2017, with the focus on how Equality Action Plans (and Disability Action Plans) could be developed to address the stakeholder's perspective of health inequalities. The stakeholders were from key Section 75 groups in the voluntary, community and trade union sectors. It was a very informative event and provided the Department the opportunity to communicate directly with the groups. Subsequently the Department were able to gather information to assist with the audit of inequalities and to develop the Equality Action Plan.

3.3 A wide range of information is collected by the Information and Research Team within the Department; this includes the annual Health Survey Northern Ireland which gathers data on sex, age, ethnicity, religion, number of children in household, marital status, limiting long-standing illness, and sexual identity. Statistics are also routinely published by sex and age, e.g. smoking prevalence by sex and age-group⁶. However the Department are limited in the analysis undertaken for categories such as ethnicity and sexual identity. The sample size of around 4,000 respondents means that there is a small proportion of respondents identifying as an ethnicity other than 'White' and sexual identity other than 'Heterosexual'.

⁶ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/smoking-tables-hsni.xlsx>

3.4 Information is also gathered to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations on Section 75 groups through the Departmental tools of screening and, where appropriate, equality impact assessments.

4. KEY FINDINGS OF THE AUDIT OF INEQUALITIES

4.1 The information collected and analysed relative to health inequalities within the nine Section 75 groups was assessed on a desired outcomes basis. The outcomes based approach is a planning process that improves quality of life conditions in communities and improves outcomes for service users. Policy leads were involved to ensure the best analysis, and identified inequalities experienced by service users, employees and others that could be addressed by the Department's policies, programmes or processes. The following health inequalities were identified:

	Health Inequality	Section 75 Category affected
1	A rapidly ageing population of which society is getting older: people are living longer, often with long-term health conditions, and we are having fewer children.	Age, Dependents, Disability, Gender
2	The difference in health and wellbeing outcomes between the most and least deprived areas are still stark, examples include life expectancy, mental health problems, indicators of birth weights and obesity. (Mental Health action measures addressed in the proposed DAP 2018-2023)	Age, Gender, Race
3	Economic, social and environmental factors, and experiences early in life, play a major role in determining health outcomes and social,	Age

	educational, economic and other outcomes.	
4	Migrant, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and the Irish Traveller communities represent a diverse and dynamic population with priority health needs which need greater awareness and promotion.	Race
5	People with dementia: not receiving appropriate care and treatment.	Age
6	Younger people and men who have sex with men are especially vulnerable to sexual ill health	Age, Sexual orientation
7	Lower uptake of cervical cancer screening in women aged 25-29 compared to those in the other age groups.	Gender
8	Marginalised women (those with disabilities, traveller women, BME, rural women etc.) are less likely to avail of the antenatal and post natal maternity services and sexual health services.	Gender, Disability, Race
9	Tackling domestic and sexual violence and abuse on all sections of the community	All S75 groups
10	To improve the health and wellbeing of children, young people and adults in contact with the criminal justice system.	Age, Gender, Disability, Sexual orientation, Race

5. EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

5.1 The Equality Action Plan sets out the actions the Department proposes to take to address inequality issues identified from the audit of inequalities. Of necessity

some of the actions relate to measures which are already in place and the continuation is expected to make a positive impact. There are also new action measures proposed. We will regularly review and develop the plan, and will identify additional measures throughout the life of the plan. Full details of actions in the Equality Action Plan can be found in **Annex A**.

5.2 *It should be noted that, pending the appointment of a Minister, the Department will work towards delivery of the targets specified in the Plan and within the limits of the financial and other resources allocated to the Department. The Plan will be updated as new priorities and targets are approved by a new Minister and Executive.*

6. DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

6.1 Under Section 49 (A) of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, the Department of Health is required when carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to:

- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

6.2 Under Section 49(B) of the DDA 1995, the Department is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a Disability Action Plan showing how it proposes to fulfil these duties in relation to its function

6.3 The disability duties, like the duties under Section 75, adopt the mainstreaming approach. Through equality screening tools the Department considers the effect of their policies, or likely impacts, and if there is an opportunity to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people or encourage their participation in public life by making changes or introducing additional measures.

- 6.4 The Department's current Disability Action Plan (DAP) was published in 2012, and will expire at the end of March 2018.
- 6.5 The Department commenced pre-engagement with disability groups in October/November 2016 and was involved in a stakeholder engagement event arranged by the Health & Social Trusts on 19 January 2017 (refer to para.3.2). The views from both pre-engagement exercises helped to inform the proposed plan for 2018-2023. The proposed DAP, attached at **Annex B**, aligns with the draft Programme for Government measures and has a more outcomes based approach.
- 6.6 *Pending the appointment of a Minister, the Department will work towards delivery of the targets specified in the Plan and within the limits of the financial and other resources allocated to the Department. The Plan will be updated as new priorities and targets are approved by a new Minister and Executive.*