

# **Section 75 Equality Action Plan 2013 – 2018**

## **Business Services Organisation**

This document can be made available on request and where reasonably practicable in an alternative format, Easy Read, Braille, audio formats (CD, mp3 or DAISY), DVD, large print or other languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.

**Updated June 2017**

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## **Introduction**

In 2010 the Equality Commission NI asked the Business Services Organisation to develop an action plan outlining actions to promote equality of opportunity and good relations and address inequalities. Our first action plan was developed for a period of two years (2011-2013), to align it with our corporate and business planning cycles at the time. This document presents the reviewed and updated action plan as of June 2017. Actions that have been completed are taken off so that the plan remains current.

## **Equality scheme commitments**

Our action plan outlined actions related to our functions and took account of our equality scheme commitments relating to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Our equality scheme is available on our website: [www.hscbusiness.hscni.net](http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net)

The law requires us when we carry out work that we promote equality of opportunity across nine equality categories; age, gender, disability, marital status, political opinion, caring responsibilities, sexual orientation, religion and ethnicity. It also requires us to consider good relations in relation to political opinion, religion and ethnicity.

In our equality scheme we gave a commitment to monitoring progress and updating the plan as necessary. We also said we would engage and consult with stakeholders when reviewing the action plan.

We keep our equality action plan under review and report annually, to the Equality Commission, on what we have done.

## **How we carried out the review in 2012-13**

As we were coming to the end of the first plan we undertook a larger scale review, to consider what actions to include in our new equality action plan.

In carrying out our review we considered a number of questions.

1. Have actions been delivered? If not these were carried over into our new plan.
2. Have intended outcomes been achieved? If actions were delivered but the intended outcome has not been achieved we carried over the priority into the new plan with new actions.
3. Were there actions identified in our first audit of inequalities but not prioritised for our first plan? If these are still relevant we carried them over into the new plan.

We also looked at a range of sources of information such as:

- new research
- new data having become available
- new equality screening exercises having been completed
- issues raised in consultations or through other engagement with staff and service users since our first action plan.

From this we considered if new actions needed to be developed for 2013-2018.

## **What we do**

The Business Services Organisation is part of health and social care in Northern Ireland. We were set up in April 2009.

### **We do things like:**

- Provide medical cards to allow people to go to their doctor and the hospital.
- We let people know when they need to get checks on their health. Such as cervical and bowel cancer screening.
- We help staff working in health and social care to get their pensions.
- We check out if the money dentists, doctors, opticians and pharmacists get for their services is correct and we pay them.
- We buy goods and services that health and social care organisations use for patients and clients like gloves or band aids.

- Our lawyers provide help to health and social care organisations in cases that go to court.
- We need to make sure we have enough money to pay for the services.
- We also provide money advice to other health and social care organisations.
- We work with other health and social care organisations to make sure that we all obey the laws about employment, services, ethics, equality and human rights.
- We provide corporate services that help with the day to day running of the Business Services Organisation for example health and safety, buildings where staff work and handling complaints.
- We make sure that we make it easy for people to find out about what we do by keeping our website up to date.
- We draw up contracts with our customers and check out if they are happy with our services. We carry out surveys.

## **What is in our equality action plan**

The following section outlines our actions for the next year. We will involve Section 75 equality groups and individuals in the next review of our plan. This document is also available on our website: [www.hscbusiness.hscni.net](http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net)

**Theme 1: Accessibility of Information and Services**  
**Focusing on service areas with greatest impact on users of**  
**our service (including members of public and staff)**  
Action Measure 1

**Scope of the objective**

To agree an approach to the provision of accessible formats for BSO

**Potential benefits (including, if relevant, Return on Investment)**

- Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities
- Information and communication needs of older people, young people, those with sensory impairments, people with a learning disability, people with physical disabilities, and minority ethnic people are addressed
- Criteria for prioritising actions are agreed and recorded to ensure that information is provided in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable

**Risk of not taking action**

- Non-compliance with best practice or research evidence
- Legal challenges under Disability Discrimination Act

**What needs to be done**

- Adapt and adopt regional policy.
- Raise awareness of policy amongst service users and staff.
- Take lead responsibility for engaging with partner organisations to maximise collaboration in implementing the policy.
- BSO will agree an approach for provision of information in alternative formats and identify any gaps
- Develop business cases and costing for prioritised areas if required.
- Review policy and its implementation.

**Lead Responsibility**

Director of Human Resources

**Timeline**

By end March 2018 for agreeing approach

**Resource implications**

staff time: 10 working days senior staff

**How we will monitor impacts**

- customer satisfaction surveys and feedback
- number of requests for information by type of format

**Theme 1: Accessibility of Information and Services  
Focusing on service areas with greatest impact on users of  
our service (including members of public and staff)**

**Action Measure 2**

**Scope of the objective**

Family Practitioner Services: Call/Recall Services for Bowel  
Cancer Screening – Improved access to helpline

**Potential benefits (including, if relevant, Return on  
Investment)**

- Remove barriers to accessing Bowel Cancer Screening helpline for service users not fluent in English and those with hearing impairments
- Increase uptake of cancer screening
- Reduction of follow up costs and health care costs

**Risk of not taking action**

Legal challenges under Disability Discrimination Act

**What needs to be done**

- Explore the potential for the use of a range of communication methods to improve accessibility for those with sensory impairments including SMS text message facility and Text Relay
- Advertise all options for accessing advice and support services including number of text relay, SMS text messaging (in all correspondence) and availability of telephone interpreting services
- Engage with the Screening Programme Manager in the Public Health Agency to ensure that any information on screening for bowel cancer (and cervical cancer) includes accessibility details as per the options noted above
- Sign off changes in relation to accessibility to screening letter
- Discussions with RNIB to improve communication and raise awareness of Bowel cancer Screening programme for those with visual impairment.

**Lead Responsibility**

Cancer Screening Call/Recall Manager

- With support from Equality Unit
- In Engagement with PHA Communication and Quality-Assurance functions



## **Timelines**

By end March 2018

### **Resource implications**

- Staff time (development of protocols, administration of providing advice and support in range of formats noted above)
- Potentially equipment costs (mobile phone or software to enable communication between PC and mobile phones)

### **How we will monitor impacts**

- Customer survey
- Engagement with users and representative groups
- Log of requests in alternative formats

**Theme 1: Accessibility of Information and Services**  
**Focusing on service areas with greatest impact on users of our service (including members of public and staff)**  
Action Measure 4

**Scope of the objective**

Legal Services: Review finance processes within the Directorate of Legal Services relating to payments including payment of damages and claimants' costs following settlement of claims to minimise delays

**Potential benefits (including, if relevant, Return on Investment)**

Delays in payments, which may disproportionately affect people with a disability, are minimised

**Risk of not taking action**

Not an issue in view of existing controls

**What needs to be done**

- Continue to review current administrative finance processes
- Continue with financial audit processes to identify any unreasonable delays
- Continue to implement any recommendations from financial audit outcomes

**Lead Responsibility**

Chief Legal Adviser

**Timeline**

Ongoing in line with financial audit plan

**Resource implications**

No additional resources required

**How we will monitor impacts**

Internal financial auditing processes

## **Theme 3: User Engagement**

### Action Measure 1

#### **Scope of the objective**

Family Practitioner Services: Needs of Section 75 groups are taken into consideration in the planning, design and delivery of BSO Cancer Screening Services (Call/Recall and Helpline)

#### **Potential benefits (including, if relevant, Return on Investment)**

- Collaborative working with the PHA
- Continuous improvement of services and their accessibility

#### **Risk of not taking action**

#### **What needs to be done**

- Engage with Programme Manager in the Public Health Agency to secure Family Practitioner representation in any future reference group in relation to cancer screening services
- Engage with service users and representative groups
- Meeting held with Gender Reassignment Group regarding gender change protocols for Patient Registration, Cytology and Breast Screening Services. Further exploration required with the Health & Care Index team and PHA.

#### **Lead Responsibility**

Cancer Screening Call/Recall Manager

#### **Timeline**

By end Mar 2018

#### **Resource implications**

Staff time to attend any reference group meetings and engagement events: 2 working days senior staff

#### **How we will monitor impacts**

feedback from service users

## **Theme 4: Using Our Influence**

### Action Measure 1

#### **Scope of the objective**

Information Technology Services: Improved protocols and systems are in place to enhance the sharing of relevant patient information across HSC organisations.

#### **Potential benefits (including, if relevant, Return on Investment)**

- Information is shared in compliance with data protection, ICT Policies, human rights and other relevant legislative requirements.
- Needs of a diverse range of service users are addressed.
- Efficient utilisation of ICT
- More focused patient care
- Contributes to patient safety
- Supports more efficient 'out of hours' care
- Minimises duplication
- Supports health and wellbeing strategy.

#### **Risk of not taking action**

Potential challenges under Disability Discrimination Act. Not realising full potential of ICT

#### **What needs to be done**

- Continue to work with HSC Board, regional HSC organisations and the Department of Health to progress the development of information sharing arrangements.
- Ensuring that HSC service users etc. are fully aware of scope for information sharing across applications/systems, including training, where appropriate.
- Ensuring that relevant professional groups endorse proposals.
- Ensuring that relevant legislative requirements are adhered to.

- Continue to consult with appropriate decision-makers, representative groups and affected individuals at the technology design stage.
- Investigate scope for capturing patient/client disability, ethnicity and other data related needs in Health and Care Number at replacement stage.

### **Lead Responsibility**

Assistant Director of Information Technology Services

### **Timeline**

By end Mar 2018

### **Resource implications**

- Staff time in development of protocols, etc.
- Enhanced specifications
- Implementation and training

As resourcing implications would be specific to individual system requirements, this cannot be quantified until system specification and scoping was undertaken as part of individual procurements.

### **How we will monitor impacts**

- Customer surveys
- Service User Groups

<b>Theme 5: Awareness Raising and Training</b> Action Measure 2
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**Scope of the objective**

Human Resources: Increased capacity of line managers to identify and respond to the range of Section 75 (equality and good relations) needs of their staff through access to guidance materials

**Potential benefits (including, if relevant, Return on Investment)**

- Healthy, productive and engaged workforce
- Retention of staff
- Supports health and wellbeing strategy
- Opportunity to roll out across BSO and partner organisations in order to optimise use of resources

**Risk of not taking action****What needs to be done**

- Produce guidance resource for line managers on how best to support staff from different Section 75 groups
- Engage with managers, relevant voluntary sector groups and trade unions
- Disseminate and raise awareness of resource

**Lead Responsibility**

Assistant Director of Human Resources (Operations) and Assistant Director (Workforce Planning and Organisational Development) with support from Equality Unit

**Timeline**

By end Mar 2018

**Resource implications**

- Staff time: 5 working days senior staff HR; 5 working days senior staff Equality Unit

**How we will monitor impacts**

- Staff survey
- Number of grievances

- Feedback from users forum and small agencies forum

## **Theme 5: Awareness Raising and Training**

### **Action Measure 3**

#### **Scope of the objective**

Human Resources: BSO supports staff who identify as transgender or non-binary in meeting their particular needs in the workplace linked to their gender identity

#### **Potential benefits (including, if relevant, Return on Investment)**

- Retain and attract staff who identify as transgender or non-binary
- Demonstrate commitment to inclusive workplace

#### **Risk of not taking action**

Breach of anti-discrimination legislation and data protection act due to staff lack of knowledge

#### **What needs to be done**

- Review outcome of consultation on draft policy and make necessary changes
- Adopt policy
- Raise awareness of policy amongst line managers

#### **Lead Responsibility**

Director of Human Resources with support from Equality Unit

#### **Timeline**

By end Mar 2018

#### **Resource implications**

Staff time: 1 working day senior staff HR; 10 working days senior staff Equality Unit

#### **How we will monitor impacts**

Policy in place

Line managers' awareness raised



Providing Support to Health and Social Care

2 Franklin Street  
Belfast  
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