

Equality and Disability Action Plan 2018-2023

Consultation Document

October 2017

Northern Ireland Social Care
Council

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We will consider any request for this document in another format or language.

Please contact us at:

7th Floor Millennium House,
19-25 Great Victoria Street,
Belfast,
BT2 7AQ

info@niscc.hscni.net

<https://nisconline.hscni.net/>

028 9536 2600

Introduction

James Perry, Chair of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) and Colm Conway, Chief Executive of NISCC commented –

We are committed to promoting equality and good relations. For people with a disability, we recognise that we have to do more to promote positive attitudes and to encourage their participation in public life.

We want to make sure we do this in a way that makes a difference to people. We will put in place what is necessary to do so. This includes people, time and money. Where it is right to do so, we will include actions from this plan in the yearly plans we develop for the organisation as a whole. These are called 'corporate' or 'business' plans.

We will also put everything in place in the organisation to make sure that we do what we have to under the law. This includes making one person responsible overall for making sure we do what we say we are going to do in our Equality and Disability Action Plan.

We will make sure we let our staff know of what is in our plan. We will also train our staff and help them understand what they need to do.

The person in our organisation who is responsible for making sure that we do what we have promised to do is Declan McAllister. When you have any questions you can contact him at:

7th Floor Millennium House,
19-25 Great Victoria Street,
Belfast,
BT2 7AQ

028 9536 2600

Declan.McAllister@niscc.hscni.net

Who we are and what we do

NISCC is part of health and social care in Northern Ireland.

We do things like:

- Maintain the register which has around 37,000 social workers, social care workers and students on it.
- We carry out investigations about the conduct of social workers and social care workers who are registered with us. Social workers have Standards of Conduct and Practice (previously referred to as Codes of Conduct) which they must comply with.
- Review the Standards to ensure they are always up to date and reflect good practice.
- Ensure those who are registered complete all the necessary training they need.
- Take into account the views and experiences of service users and carers when we are planning and delivering our work.

How people can be involved in our work

There are a number of ways in which people can be involved in the work of NISCC –

- Meetings of Council are open to the public and can provide a way to observe how Council works. Minutes of meetings are also published on our website and can be provided in hard copy if necessary;
- Users of social care services and carers are encouraged to be members of our Participation Partnership which challenges how NISCC designs and delivers its business and policies.
- We publicly consult on a wide range of policies and initiatives and encourage the public to respond and help us ensure our

business best meets the needs of those who use social care services.

- We advertise for lay members (members of the public with experience of social care) to apply to be panel members for Fitness to Practise and committee hearings.
- We openly recruit for staff to cover a wide range of posts on a regular basis.

What the law says

NISCC has to follow the law under **Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998**. It says that in our work we have to promote equality and good relations. We have to treat people fairly and based on their needs and to make things better for staff and people who use our services. It also says that we have to build better relationships between different groups of people.

There are nine different equality groups that the law requires us to look at:

- Gender (and gender identities)
- Age
- Religion
- Political opinion
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Marital status
- Having dependants or not.

There are three good relations groups we need to consider:

- Religion
- Political opinion
- Ethnicity

We also have to follow the law under the **Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006**, which says that we have to:

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and

- encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

This includes people with any type of disability, whether for example, physical disabilities; sensory disabilities; autism; learning disabilities; mental health conditions; or conditions that are long-term. Some of these disabilities may be hidden, others may be visible.

Both pieces of legislation require us to develop an action plan: an Equality Action Plan and a Disability Action Plan. We have to send these plans to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and then report every year on what we have done.

How we reviewed our last plans and developed these new plans

In starting off to develop these plans we looked at what we have done so far to promote equality and good relations, to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and to encourage their participation in public life.

We asked all teams in our organisation to think through the following questions:

- What has worked well?
- What hasn't worked well?
- What lessons have we learned?
- Did we do what we said we would do?
- Has this made a difference for people in the way we thought it would?

For the new plans, we asked them to consider two questions:

- In your area of work, what are the key issues for people in the equality groupings?
- What can you do to address these issues?

We encouraged our staff to look at a range of sources of information such as:

- new research or data
- equality screening exercises that have been completed
- their professional experience and knowledge

- issues raised in consultations or through other engagement with staff and service users.

We also learned from what we heard when we:

- held coffee mornings to talk with staff about issues important to those who have a disability and those who care for somebody who has a disability
- ran a survey with staff to find out what they think an Employer of Choice for people who have a disability or those who care for somebody with a disability looks like
- spoke with the members of our staff disability network to find out what we should do to promote equality for those who have a disability and those who care for somebody who has a disability
- together with our colleagues in the Health and Social Care Trusts ran an engagement event with people from different equality groupings to find out what they think we could do to better promote equality.

We also read up on what the Equality Commission says would be good to do. All this helped us think about what else we could do to make a difference.

We think it is important to involve people from different groups in developing our plan. This is why we will set up meetings as part of this consultation. This will include speaking to our staff, especially the two networks we have in place: Tapestry – our disability staff network, and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Staff Forum for the whole of Health and Social Care.

What we have done so far

This is some of what we have done to promote equality.

- We produced a signposting resource for our staff. It provides information on support networks in the community for people from each of the nine equality groups. We update this resource every year.
- We put in place an Accessible Formats Policy; this policy relates to all of the nine equality groups including age,

gender, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political opinion, dependants, religion and marital status. It addresses specific needs in relation to sensory impairment, learning disability, sexual orientation, older people, younger people, translation and interpreting for minority ethnic groups and more general literacy levels that are of particular importance.

- We ensured that all our job descriptions and advertisements for open competition positions included a full welcome statement to support our commitment to encouraging all people to apply for appointments.
- We ensured that equality awareness formed part of our induction programme for new staff and newly appointed managers.
- We collected equality data on our workforce including the social care workforce to help us ensure that our policy and decisions would not adversely impact on any one of the Section 75 groups.

This is some of what we have done to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people

- To date, we have held seven disability awareness days for our staff. Each looked at different disabilities: Epilepsy, Sight loss and blindness, Depression, Hearing loss and deafness, Learning disabilities, Cancer, and Arthritis and Musculoskeletal conditions. We also spoke to staff to find out about issues which they felt we needed to raise awareness about and this included promoting the help and support available to carers.
- We developed an e-learning resource on disability. It is available to all Health and Social Care staff. All our staff are required to complete the programme at induction.
- We include the disability duties in all Equality Awareness and Equality Screening Training that the BSO Equality Unit delivers.

- We have delivered training sessions on mental health awareness to our staff, including on mental health first aid, mindfulness and managing stress; and courses for staff who are carers.
- We developed a staff resource on disability etiquette, a resource and checklist on how to positively portray people with a disability in their work.
- We arranged face to face training sessions for all our staff on disability awareness.
- We have checked our website to make sure it is accessible.
- We commissioned a programme called 'Synergy' which enabled staff to work alongside a range of individuals including those with a disability to help promote awareness and understanding.
- We actively produced easy read materials on a range of subjects – in particular when we were consulting on new policies.

Encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

- We participated in a disability work placement scheme together with our Health and Social Care partner organisations. So far, the Scheme has provided between 5 and 15 placements for people with a disability in our organisations every year.
- We engaged one individual through the placement scheme in a job role in NISCC who went on to successfully compete and attain a full-time paid employment role in NISCC.
- We arranged for the translation of written information into Braille on a number of occasions to support committee work along with facilitating the use of interpreting services and the provision of materials in specialised formats for those registrants or witnesses who have made the relevant requests.
- We developed standards and guidance for the involvement of people with a disability and a checklist for organising inclusive meetings.

- We put in place a process for publishing screening templates as soon as they are completed. A disability organisation had suggested that we do so. We do the same for publishing the quarterly screening reports.
- We developed a resource for line managers on reasonable adjustments for staff with a disability.
- We set up a disability network for our staff. Part of the role of this network is to raise disability issues with decision makers in our organisation.

What we have learned so far

Monitoring

Even with proactive encouragement, our staff seemed reluctant to declare their disability. So we need to keep working on this, including trying to find out why staff do not declare their disability. We will work closely with our disability staff network on this.

Placements

We evaluated our placement scheme each year and made changes in the next year's scheme to improve the experience for participants. We will carry this learning into our new plan. Managers and staff who have been involved in the scheme to date have told us that they have gained a better understanding of disabilities through working side by side a person who has a disability. Many have been impressed by the attitude and performance of the individual on placement.

Awareness Days

We have found that attendance at awareness events is greatest when the subject is most relevant to staff. This can be because they have the condition themselves or they know or work with someone who has the condition. We will continue to ask staff which areas relating to disability they would like more information on.

Training

We have found that our e-learning training on Disability is a really useful resource to train our large numbers of staff. We have also

found that sometimes we need to run specific training courses, for example on autism awareness or deaf awareness when the need is identified. We will continue to take this approach of a combination of e-learning and classroom based training. People have told us that they take away a lot from sessions that are delivered by people with a disability themselves. We also want to do more to promote awareness and understanding of mental health issues so that staff feel supported and are informed.

What is in the new plans

There are two separate tables below. The first table lists all the actions that we will do to promote equality and good relations. This is our Equality Action Plan. The second table describes what we will do to promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability and to encourage their participation in public life. This is our Disability Action Plan. In both plans we also say what difference we hope to make and when we will do these actions.

How we will monitor

Every year we write up what we have done. We also explain when we haven't done something. We send this report to the Equality Commission. We also publish this report on our website: <https://www.niscc.info>

We have a look at the plans every year to see whether we need to make any changes to them. If we need to, we write those changes into the plans. Before we make any big changes we talk to people in the equality groupings to see what they think.

When we finish an action we take it off the plans for the next year. That way we will keep our plans up to date. They will show what we still have to do.

After five years we will look at our plans again to see how we have done. We will also see what else we could do.

Whenever we develop or look at our plans we will invite people who have a disability to help us.

The plans are also available on our website: <https://www.niscc.info>

We send our plans to all organisations and individuals on our consultation list when we have finalised them and also when we have made major changes to them.

To find out whether what we do makes a difference, we will do a number of things, for example:

- For training and awareness events, we ask our staff about what learning they are taking away with them and what they may do differently as a result of what they have learned.
- We do a survey with people from a particular equality group after we have delivered an action targeted at them to ask whether they feel better supported as a result.
- We check summary figures to see whether, for example, more people from a particular under-represented group are availing of a service after promoting it to them specifically.

You can find further information on how we will monitor each action in the plans themselves.

**Equality Action Plan 2018-2023:
What we will do to promote equality and good relations**

Action Point	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	By Whom/ When
<p>Carers</p> <p>1. Promote information for staff who are carers on available policies and measures that might meet their needs; including sign-posting to relevant support organisations.</p>	<p>Staff who are carers feel more supported in the workplace</p>	<p>Sickness absence of carers reduced Retention of staff who are carers</p>	<p>BSO HR with support by Equality Unit 2018/19</p>
<p>Consider</p> <p>2. Develop a protocol to ensure that service users who are carers are accommodated and facilitated at meetings organised by NISCC</p>	<p>People who are service users and who are carers are better able to participate on a voluntary basis with NISCC</p>	<p>Increased attendance at events and meetings More flexible ways to communicate and engage introduced</p>	<p>NISCC 2018/19</p>

<p>Gender Identity</p> <p>3. Deliver awareness and training initiatives to relevant staff and managers as part of the roll-out of the Gender Identity and Expression Employment Policy</p>	<p>Staff who identify as transgender and non-binary feel more supported in the workplace</p>	<p>90% of relevant staff have been trained</p> <p>100% of managers have been trained</p>	<p>BSO HR with support by Equality Unit March 2020</p>
<p>4. Undertake a review including engagement with representative groups and individuals to take account of gender identities and develop an action plan as a result</p>	<p>Service users who identify as transgender, non-binary and intersex feel more supported</p>	<p>Evidence of consideration and actions to address any issues reported on in annual review of progress.</p>	<p>NISCC 2019/20</p>
<p>Training</p> <p>5. Making a Difference – e-learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add module to suite of mandatory training for all staff • Deliver on training 	<p>Increased staff awareness of equality and human rights.</p>	<p>Making a Difference e-learning included in mandatory training for staff</p> <p>95% of staff have completed the e-learning module</p>	<p>BSO HR with support by Equality Unit Q4 2018/19 Annually</p>

<p>targets</p>	<p>Domestic Violence</p> <p>6. Undertake awareness raising relating to new support mechanisms (developed by BSO) to support staff with experience of domestic violence</p>	<p>Staff with experience of domestic violence are better supported</p>	<p>Awareness raising undertaken with 100% of staff</p>	<p>BSO HR with support by Equality Unit March 2020</p>
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Disability Action Plan 2018-2023:

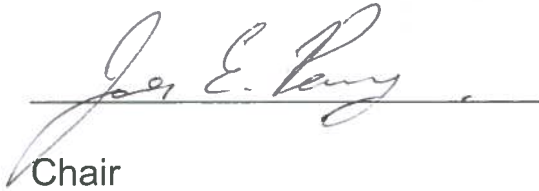
What we will do to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

Action Point	Intended Outcome	Performance Indicator and Target	By Whom/ When
<p>Awareness Days</p> <p>1. Raise awareness of specific barriers faced by people with disabilities including through linking in with National Awareness Days or Weeks (such as Mind your Health Day)</p>	<p>Increased staff awareness of the range of disabilities and needs</p>	<p>Two annual awareness days profiled >50% of staff participating in the evaluation indicate that they know more about people living with disabilities as a result of the awareness days</p>	<p>NISCC Annually</p>
<p>Placement Scheme</p> <p>2. Create and promote meaningful placement opportunities for people with disabilities in line with good practice and making use of voluntary expertise in this area.</p>	<p>People with a disability gain meaningful work experience</p>	<p>1 placement offered per year. Feedback indicates that placement meets expectations</p>	<p>NISCC Annually</p>

<p>Tapestry</p> <p>3. Promote and encourage staff to participate in the disability staff network and support the network in the delivery of its action plan.</p>	<p>Staff with a disability feel more confident that their voice is heard in decision-making. Staff with a disability feel better supported.</p>	<p>Tapestry meeting notes indicate that actions to support staff have been delivered</p>	<p>NISCC Annually</p>
<p>Monitoring</p> <p>4. Encourage staff to declare that they have a disability or care for a person with a disability through awareness raising and providing guidance to staff on the importance of monitoring.</p> <p>Prompt staff to keep up to date their personal equality monitoring records (via self-service on new Human Resources IT system)</p>	<p>More accurate data in place. Greater number of staff feel comfortable declaring they have a disability.</p>	<p>Increase in completion of disability monitoring information by staff to 90% Prompt issued to staff on a regular basis.</p>	<p>BSO HR with support by Equality Unit Annually</p>

<p>Training</p> <p>5. In collaboration with disabled people design, deliver and evaluate training for staff and Board Members on disability equality and disability legislation.</p>	<p>Increased staff and Board Member awareness of the range of disabilities and needs.</p>	<p>All staff trained (general and bespoke) within 2 years through eLearning or interactive sessions and staff awareness initiatives delivered</p> <p>Training evaluation forms</p>	<p>NISCC</p> <p>Annually</p>
<p>6. Promote, encourage and identify opportunities for more engagement for people with a disability in key work areas</p>	<p>Better engagement by people with a disability</p>	<p>Annual review of progress to ECNI</p>	<p>NISCC</p> <p>Annually</p>
<p>7. Sign up to Mental Health Charter and Every Customer Counts</p>	<p>Staff with mental health conditions feel better supported in the workplace</p>	<p>Absence figures reduced</p> <p>Increase in % of staff who declare that they have a mental health condition</p>	<p>BSO HR with support by Equality Unit</p> <p>March 2020</p>

Signed by:


Chair

Date: 26/09/17


Chief Executive

Chief Executive

Date: 26/09/17



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Belfast,
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info@nisc.hscni.net

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