

Council meeting, 13 December 2007

Equality and Diversity Scheme

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

At its meeting on 11 September 2007, the Council considered a draft copy of the equality and diversity scheme.

The Council is invited to approve the attached scheme, to be effective from 1 January 2008.

The scheme will be current for three years and progress reports will be provided to the Council each year.

Decision

The Council is invited to approve the attached scheme, and agree that it will become effective from 1 January 2008.

Background information

None

Resource implications

A number of the action points will or may have resource consequences. However, these are or will be included in normal departmental planning.

Financial implications

A number of the action points will or may have financial consequences. However, these are or will be included in normal departmental planning and budgeting.

Appendices

None

Date	Ver.	Dept/Cmte	Doc Type	Title	Status	Int. Aud.
2007-11-12	a	POL	PPR	Equality and Diversity scheme - Council 13.12.2007	Draft DD: None	Public RD: None

Date of paper
3 December 2007

Equality and Diversity Scheme

Introduction

1. The Health Professions Council (HPC) is the statutory regulator of thirteen health professions. Its primary function is to protect the public and it does so by:

- setting standards;
- approving programmes of education and training;
- registering health professionals; and
- investigating and adjudicating allegations about their fitness to practise.

2. In the course of doing so we interact with a diverse range of people, including:

- the public, especially complainants or witnesses in fitness to practise proceedings;
- registrants and potential registrants;
- education and training providers;
- health care providers, professional bodies, consumer groups and other partner organisations; and
- its employees and the “partners” who carry out tasks on its behalf.

Legislation

3. In recent years, UK government policy has moved from legislating to ensure that public bodies treat all people they impact equally, to legislation to ensure that public bodies positively promote a diverse and inclusive society.

4. We are required to meet the general duties under relevant equality legislation, including:

- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995

5. Codes of practice produced under specific pieces of legislation place a responsibility on certain named public bodies to meet ‘specific duties’. We are not a named public body in these codes of practice and therefore we are not required to publish a scheme.

6. We decided that, as part of good practice, we would go beyond existing legislative requirements and publish an equality and diversity scheme. This scheme describes the steps we have taken and will take in order to ensure that we do not discriminate against people on the basis of:

- Disability
- Age
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Race
- Religion

7. We decided to produce a single, joint equality scheme, rather than individual schemes for each of the groups listed above, as many of the steps we might take to avoid or mitigate any adverse impact are relevant to all the groups identified above.

8. Please see Annex A for statements of our policy in each of these areas.

Developing a scheme

9. Our work in producing a scheme was led by a project team with participation drawn from our Executive Management Team and managers across the organisation. The work was led by a project lead and managed by a project manager.

10. Our first step in producing a scheme was a screening process carried out by the project team.

11. We asked the head of each directorate or department to detail their processes.

12. This was screened by the project team in partnership with the directorate / department head. The project team:

- identified which functions were more relevant than others to meeting the general duties and to eliminating discrimination generally;
- prioritised those functions;
- identified those areas of work already undertaken and in the workplans of directorates and departments in the coming financial year which support the aims of the equality and diversity scheme;
- identified initial action points; and

- identified where further consultation – both internal and external – might be desirable.

Arrangements for training of employees, council members and partners

13. Early on in the development of the scheme, the members of the project team, and our Executive Management Team received training in equality and diversity issues.

14. We have also held training in equality and diversity issues for council members and for some of the ‘partners’ who carry out work on our behalf.

15. We have started a rolling programme of training in equality and diversity issues for existing and new employees.

Collection of demographic data

16. An important ongoing action point identified in the scheme is the collection of demographic data.

17. In April 2007, we began collecting demographic data from witnesses and registrants involved in our fitness to practise process. This involved sending an equality monitoring form to complainants and registrants at an early stage in the course of dealing with a complaint.

18. We already collect demographic information from applicants for employment and new employees and will continue to do so. We currently collect the following information:

- Gender
- Age
- Disability
- Race/ Ethnicity

We currently collect the following demographic information about registrants:

- Gender
- Age
- Nationality

19. In order to be sure that it is necessary to collect additional information, we plan to take a pragmatic approach, before deciding whether it is necessary to collect further data.

20. As detailed in the action points, we will first ask our Finance and Resources Committee to consider an analysis of the demographic data we hold for applicants and employees.

21. We will then ask our fitness to practise committees to consider an analysis of the data collected in the first year from registrants and complainants involved in our fitness to practise process.

22. Analysing this data will help us understand how our processes are working and potentially reveal further steps we could take to mitigate or eliminate any adverse impact.

23. Following this we will decide whether we need to consider extending our data collection to the general registrant population. This could include adding a monitoring form to all new application forms and, potentially, considering whether we should begin to collect data from existing registrants.

Consultation and involvement

24. We have used the following methods to contact and involve organisations and individuals in the development of the scheme.

Employee involvement

25. Heads of directorates and departments were involved in putting together the scheme, in addition to the members of the project team.

26. We also established an internal working group of ten employees. This comprised of nine volunteers drawn from across the organisation, and a member of the project team. The composition of the internal working group broadly represents the diversity of employees.

27. The internal working group will perform an important role in helping to fulfil the action points in the scheme.

28. For example, the internal working group have begun work by starting to impact assess human resources / partners policies.

29. Early drafts of the scheme were also considered by the middle management group (comprising of representatives drawn from each department) and the executive management team.

30. We will also consult with the wider employee population where appropriate. We routinely consult with employees when we make amendments to human resources policies.

External consultation and involvement

31. We intend to take a pragmatic and targeted approach to external consultation and involvement. We will identify where further consultation or involvement is necessary. In doing so we will consider whether consultation would be proportionate to the importance of the process and the extent of the possible or perceived adverse impact identified.

32. In the scheme, there are a number of action points which involve seeking external input on specific tasks. For example, we say that we will continue to involve outside individuals and organisations in reviewing our publications and in reviewing the accessibility of our offices.

33. At the end of the lifetime of the scheme, we will review the effectiveness of this approach. This might include considering whether a different approach to achieving external involvement is necessary.

Ongoing monitoring of action points and equality duties

34. Each individual department will be responsible for meeting the action points detailed in the scheme. Monitoring of the action plan will be undertaken by the project lead and project manager, with the project team.

35. As detailed in the action points, departmental work plans will now include an equality impact assessment to ensure that the equality implications of ongoing work are considered. These assessments will be considered by the project team on a periodic basis to ensure that all implications are considered and accounted for.

36. Our ongoing monitoring will consider not only whether any new or existing policies and processes have a negative impact on any group, but also whether there are opportunities for achieving a more positive impact.

36. Other ways of monitoring our progress are detailed in the action points, including regular scrutiny of information by our Council and Committees. For example, we say that our Finance and Resources Committee should consider demographic information collected from employees and applicants each year and further actions may arise from this consideration.

37. This scheme will run for three years. We will publish progress reports each year. These will be scrutinised by our Council prior to publication.

Further information

38. We would welcome any questions or feedback about our scheme.

39. If you have any questions or comments please contact us:

Equality and Diversity
Health Professions Council
Park House
184 Kennington Park Road
London
SE11 4BU

E-mail: policy@hpc-uk.org
Tel: 0207 840 97815

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Department/ Directorate	Completion date
<p>Human Resources (HR) / Partners</p> <p>Functions:</p> <p>Our Human Resources department is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment • Training • Implementing or updating HR policies • Absence Management • Employee relations • Advising the Remuneration Committee <p>Recent, existing and ongoing practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have taken steps to ensure that our selection process is fair and free from discrimination by ensuring that interview panels do not have access to personal information when short listing. • We have completed a review of our employee handbook to ensure that equality and diversity legislation is accounted for prior to publication of the scheme. <p>Action points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will implement a rolling programme of reviewing HR policies on a regular basis, in consultation with the equality and diversity internal working group, middle management team and employees. • We will review our practices around employment of disabled employees, particularly around adjustments following a recruitment decision, in consultation with employees. • As part of the information and consulting regulations, we will recruit HR representatives drawn from the diversity of the employee population. They will act as a link between HR and employees. 	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Part of the above</p> <p>July 2008</p>

Department/ Directorate	Completion date
<p>Action points (continued):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will conduct an employee attitude survey to find out what our employees like and dislike about HR practices in the organisation. • We will explore the feasibility of working towards obtaining the 'two ticks' symbol which denotes organisations that are positive about disability. • We will review the complaints and appeals processes for partners, including updating the guidance for appeals panel members to include guidance on equality and diversity issues relevant to their role. • We will analyse and monitor the data we collect for human resources purposes and produce a report each year for our finance and resources committee. 	<p>April 2008</p> <p>To end of 2010</p> <p>April 2008</p> <p>November 2007 and ongoing</p>

Department/ Directorate	Completion Date
<p>Facilities</p> <p>Functions:</p> <p>The Facilities department is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buildings and facilities • Mail • Reception • Catering • Security <p>Existing, Recent and ongoing practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We commissioned an accessibility audit in 2006. We have made the following changes in line with the audit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ we have improved the signage at our offices ○ we have changed the handrails to the entrance of our offices ○ we have added high visibility nosings and contoured floor coverings at the top and bottom of the steps leading to the entrance of our offices <p>Action points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will explore making the following improvements to our facilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ induction loops in the council chamber and reception area ○ audio description in the lifts • We will review our progress against the accessibility audit conducted in 2006 and present the findings, and our recommendations for future plans, to our Finance and Resources Committee. 	<p>Installation is planned by end of 2008</p> <p>Viability of proposal explored by end of 2009, with present aim for completion by end of 2011.</p> <p>By end of 2008</p>

Department/ Directorate	Completion Date
<p>Action points (continued):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will ensure that employees working on reception receive training on our arrangements for assisting people with disabilities who are visiting our offices.	Ongoing

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Department/ Directorate	Completion date
<p>Communications</p> <p>Functions:</p> <p>The functions of the Communications department are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media and campaigns • Events • Public Affairs • Publications • Internal communications • The internet <p>Recent, existing and ongoing practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We worked with the Fitness to Practise department to review two brochures – ‘How to make a complaint about a health professional’ and ‘What happens if a complaint is made about me?’ The publications benefited from the input of people with communication disabilities and we used this feedback to improve the accessibility of the style and content. • We recently produced a ‘house style’ guide which will guide employees in producing publications. This will ensure that the language and layout of publications is accessible and consistent. • We revised our visual identity and this was essentially aimed at making our publications more accessible. In carrying out this work, we benefited from the input of disability organisations. <p>Action points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to seek the input of groups representing disabled and other groups when reviewing the style, text and accessibility of our publications. • We will seek the input of our stakeholders on equality and diversity issues in our opinion polling to be commissioned in Autumn 2007. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>November 2007</p>

Department/ Directorate	Completion date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will add to all our publications so that it is clear that all our publications are available in alternative formats (e.g. Braille). 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will review the layout and content of our website to ensure that it is as accessible as possible. This will include publishing key publications on our website in a range of different languages. 	March 2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue to participate in the Joint Regulators Public Patient Involvement (PPI) group which aims to develop consistent ways in which regulators can ensure the wider involvement of patients and the public in their work. 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will publish our brochure 'How to make a complaint about a health professional' on our website in a number of different languages. 	End of 2008

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Directorate/ Department	Action points
<p>Policy and Standards</p> <p>Functions:</p> <p>The Policy and Standards department is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assisting the Council in developing strategy and policy; • assisting the Council in setting and reviewing standards; • assisting the Council in drafting guidance; • supporting Professional Liaison Groups (PLGs); • managing consultations; • managing the new professions, or ‘aspirant groups’ process; • liaising with the Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence (CHRE) on their annual performance review; and • ensuring consistency of approach across all HPC departments. <p>Existing, recent and ongoing practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We sought the input of patient groups in our recent review of our standards of conduct, performance and ethics. • When we reviewed our standards of proficiency we considered the code of practice produced by the Disability Rights Commission for qualifications bodies. • We have recently published guidance for education providers and for applicants and potential applicants to approved courses about health, disability and registration. <p>Action points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will review our consultation process to ensure that ways in which we consult are appropriate, accessible and reach a broad audience. The outcomes of our review will be considered by our Council. 	<p>April 2008</p>

Directorate/ Department	Action points
<p>Action points (continued):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will undertake a piece of work, seeking the input of disabled people and of education providers, to assess the impact and effectiveness of our guidance for disabled people, education providers and doctors – ‘A disabled person’s guide to becoming a health professional’ and ‘Information about the health reference’. • As part of our work in implementing the ‘Healthcare Professionals Crossing Borders Agreement’ we will examine using translation services to improve our accessibility for members of the public who do not speak English. • We will work with our Education department to produce a position statement / guidance in light of recent age discrimination legislation. This will describe how this affects education providers and our role in approving courses. • We will consider equality and diversity implications when we review our returners to practice requirements. • We will work with our communications department to produce a Welsh language Scheme. • On an ongoing basis, and, formally by the end of the currency of this scheme, we will review our approach on consultation and involvement of external organisations and individuals on issues with relevance to equality and diversity. 	<p>2009/10 financial year</p> <p>January 2008</p> <p>January 2008</p> <p>Review begun 2010/11 financial year</p> <p>2008/2009 financial year</p> <p>Ongoing and by end of 2010</p>

Department/ Directorate	Completion date
<p>Fitness to Practise</p> <p>Functions:</p> <p>The main functions of the Fitness to Practise department are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigation of complaints about registrants • Adjudication of cases • Case management • Registration appeals • Setting hearings • Protection of title and health and character cases <p>Existing, recent and ongoing practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have changed the standard of acceptance for allegations so that we can, in some circumstances, take complaints by telephone. This will assist complainants who are less able to make a complaint in writing. • We have reviewed our complaints leaflets, in conjunction with the communications department. <p>Action points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will review our practice notes (which provide guidance to panel members) in light of the changes to equality legislation. In particular, we will revise the practice note on equal treatment. • We will produce a new practice note on disability to ensure that panels are informed about the law and requirements about reasonable adjustments. • We will continue to train our fitness to practise partners in issues pertinent to ensuring a fair hearing, including equality and diversity issues and we will evaluate the effectiveness of this. • We will collect demographic data from registrants involved in fitness to practise proceedings and from complainants. We will analyse this data and present the findings to our three fitness to practise committees. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>March 2008</p> <p>Legal Assessors will be trained in equality and diversity issues in January 2008</p> <p>April 2008</p>

Department/ Directorate	Completion date
<p>Action points (continued):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will review the way in which we schedule hearings to ensure that we identify and accommodate any additional needs at an early stage. • We will establish a policy around the handling and purchasing of religious books . 	<p>February 2008 and ongoing</p> <p>January 2007</p>

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Department/Directorate	Completion date
<p data-bbox="245 243 781 279">Education: Approvals and Monitoring</p> <p data-bbox="245 312 399 346">Functions:</p> <p data-bbox="245 384 932 451">The main functions of the Education: Approvals and Monitoring department are:</p> <ul data-bbox="290 489 971 663" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="290 489 971 590">• Visiting education providers to assess their programmes against the standards of education and training and training. <li data-bbox="290 594 824 663">• Managing the annual monitoring and major/minor changes processes. <p data-bbox="245 699 789 735">Existing, recent and ongoing practice:</p> <ul data-bbox="290 772 932 1184" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="290 772 932 1041">• Awareness of equality and diversity issues is imbedded throughout our standards of education and training. In particular, we have specific requirements for education providers and placement providers to have equal opportunities and anti-discrimination policies and to offer sufficient pastoral support to students. <li data-bbox="290 1083 919 1184">• We routinely take into account the needs of visitors, education providers and employees when we arrange approvals visits. <p data-bbox="245 1220 440 1255">Action points</p> <ul data-bbox="290 1293 948 1843" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="290 1293 948 1461">• We will work with the Communications department to formally review our publications against the house style as part of our rolling programme of reviewing our processes and publications. <li data-bbox="290 1535 948 1602">• We will work with the partner manager to train visitors on equality and diversity issues. <li data-bbox="290 1640 948 1843">• We will work with the policy and standards department to produce a position statement / guidance in light of recent age discrimination legislation. This will describe how this affects education providers and our role in approving courses. 	<p data-bbox="997 1293 1268 1497">Ongoing - Annual monitoring and approvals publications reviewed in 2008/09 financial year</p> <p data-bbox="997 1535 1219 1602">From December 2008</p> <p data-bbox="997 1640 1182 1675">January 2008</p>

Department/Directorate	Completion date
<p>Secretariat</p> <p>Functions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Council and committees, ensuring that these have the governance structures, the administrative support, and resources needed to deliver the HPC strategy. • Organisational lead on matters relating to implementation of the Freedom of Information and the Data Protection Acts. <p>Existing, recent and ongoing practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment campaigns for new Council members aim to target a diverse range of candidates. • Council and committee papers provided in different formats if requested. • Consideration given to accessibility of external venues. • Feedback forms provided for Council members to assist the Secretariat in providing for their needs. <p>Action points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing consideration will be given to methods of ensuring that Council members are recruited from a diverse range of backgrounds. • The Secretariat will work with the Communications Department to further develop the format of Council papers to ensure that these are accessible to all groups. • All new Council members will receive equality and diversity training. 	<p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

Department/Directorate	Completion date
<p data-bbox="228 241 592 281">Information Technology</p> <p data-bbox="228 310 391 350">Functions</p> <ul data-bbox="289 384 737 527" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="289 384 609 424">• Back Office systems <li data-bbox="289 422 737 462">• Network and security systems <li data-bbox="289 459 479 499">• IT projects <li data-bbox="289 497 605 537">• Information services <p data-bbox="228 562 784 602">Existing, recent and ongoing practice</p> <ul data-bbox="289 632 854 737" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="289 632 854 737">• Adjustments researched and offered to employees with particular needs on an individual basis. <p data-bbox="228 768 440 808">Action points</p> <p data-bbox="228 840 959 1018">There are no specific action points for the Information Technology department. However, the department is likely to play an important role in the delivery of action points in other areas (e.g. in collection, storage and analysis of demographic data).</p>	

Department/Directorate	Completion date
<p>Registrations</p> <p>Functions:</p> <p>The registrations department is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing applications for registration from UK, international and grandparenting applicants. • Answering queries from applicants. • Processing applications for readmission to the register and for renewal. • Changes of address and other registration administration. • Answering queries from registrants. <p>Existing, recent and ongoing practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We revised our application forms and guidance notes to make sure that they were accurate, easy to follow and written in easy to understand English. <p>Action points:</p> <p>There are no specific action points for the registrations department. However, a number of the action points elsewhere, particularly in relation to alternative formats, are likely to benefit this area as well.</p>	

Department/Directorate	Completion date
<p>Finance</p> <p>The main functions of the finance department are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management and financial accounting • Accounts payable • Banking • Suppliers <p>Existing, recent and ongoing practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be completed <p>Action points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We review our fees every two years. When we review our fees, we will consider the equality and diversity implications of our existing fees, and any proposed new fees, drawing on the existing data we hold. For example, we might consider whether our readmission fee has a disproportionate impact on certain groups rather than others. • We will explore the possibility of making equality and diversity requirements of suppliers during our tender process. This will include considering practices in other organisations. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>2008/09 financial year</p>

Department/Directorate	Completion date
<p>All</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will analyse the demographic data we hold and consider whether we need to collect further data. In particular we will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - present an analysis of the demographic data collected as part of human resources practice to our finances and resources committee. - present an analysis of the demographic data collected as part of our fitness to practise process. - make further decisions about whether to collect further data, and, if so, what that data should be. • Each directorate/ department will include an equality impact assessment in their yearly workplans. The workplans set out the planned work for that department in the coming financial year. These will be periodically reviewed by the project team. • We will begin a rolling programme of training for all employees, partners and council members on equality and diversity issues. 	<p>November 2007</p> <p>April 2008</p> <p>Ongoing – from April 2008</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>