

SOUTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL

EQUALITY SCHEME



*Northern Ireland Act
Section 75
Statutory Equality Obligations*

**Quaker Buildings, High Street, Lurgan
Co Armagh BT66 8BB**

May 2001

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FOREWORD

Equality is a central tenet of the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement. The work of putting equality at the heart of all public policy decision making is just beginning. The Southern Health and Social Services Council is fully committed to mainstreaming equality into all aspects of its work. We believe the process required to achieve this requires the fullest consultation, maximum participation and access to good quality information.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Council, in carrying out its functions, to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. Under the Act we must 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; between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; and between persons with dependents and persons without. In addition, we must have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. As part of this obligation we must prepare an Equality Scheme for submission to the Equality Commission by 30 June 2000. The purpose of the Scheme is to set out how we will fulfil our statutory duties in relation to all our functions, powers and duties relating to Northern Ireland.

We are fully committed to the effective discharge of the new equality obligations and will give leadership to achieve this. We will put in place internal arrangements to ensure that the duties are effectively complied with and for monitoring and reviewing progress. We are also fully committed to the development and delivery of a planned programme of communication and training and we will allocate the necessary resources (in terms of people, time and money) to ensure that the statutory duties are complied with and that the Equality Scheme is drawn up and implemented effectively and on time.

We are fully committed to working in an open and inclusive way with organisations and people within and outside the Council, both to achieve the successful implementation of the Scheme and to improve the Council's policies for the benefit of the population we serve. In pursuit of this goal we will take steps to ensure that the information we provide is sufficient, timely and appropriate to enable local groups to consider the full implications of our proposals.

The Scheme will be formally reviewed in 5 years time but in the interim it will be

treated as a 'live working document' and as such will be kept under review. Each year we will publish a report reviewing and monitoring the progress we have made in mainstreaming equal opportunities and good relations into our work. Comments on how best we could further promote equality of opportunity and good relations are welcomed.

We wish to acknowledge the time and effort put in by the many small voluntary, community and charitable organisations who responded to our draft Scheme.

We look forward to a new era of working proactively and in partnership with a range of organisations in pursuit of equality of opportunity and good relations.

Fionnuala Cook
Chairwoman

Seamus Magee
Chief Officer

10 May 2001

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a new statutory obligation on all public authorities in respect of equality of opportunity and good relations. Following a period of consultation on our draft equality Scheme (which lasted from 4 May to 16 June 2000) detailed comments were received. Amendments have been made and a revised scheme prepared. This document sets out our revised Scheme and how we propose meeting our statutory obligations under the Scheme.

2 OUR ROLE

2.1 We were established in 1991 as an independent statutory consumer organisation¹. We have a duty to represent the public's views and interests, to review the work of health and social services (the services) and to recommend any improvements needed. We are one of four Health and Social Services Councils in Northern Ireland.

2.2 We have a legal right to:

- be consulted by the Southern Health and Social Services Board (the board) on any major development in or changes to the services;
- receive information, from the board, about the planning and running of the services; and
- visit health and social service facilities in the public sector.

2.3 Our main activities are described below.

- To represent the public's views when decisions are being made about the services.
- To influence the board's activities which relate to introducing services.
- To respond to proposals or plans put forward by the board.
- To offer support and guidance to patients or members of the public who want to complain about any part of the services.

- To carry out research into how patients view the services and their experiences of them.
- To monitor the performance of particular services against the standards set out in their charters.
- To give the public a range of information about the services.
- To visit health and social service facilities run by the board or a health and social services trust.

3 OUR STRUCTURE

3.1 We have 24 members who are appointed by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS). Ten of our members are representatives from the five local authorities covering the Southern Board's area. There are two representatives from Armagh City and District Council, one from Banbridge District Council, three from Craigavon Borough Council, one from Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council and three from Newry and Mourne District Council.

The remaining representatives come from voluntary organisations with an interest in the services in our area or are independent representatives with an interest in health and social care.

Our Membership

10 (40%) local authority representatives

7 (30%) voluntary sector representatives

7 (30%) independent representatives.

3.2 Representatives, except those from local authorities, are appointed under the Nolan principles - public appointments on merit through advertising. Representatives are usually appointed for four years, but this can be extended to eight years.

3.3 We have five full-time staff and our Chief Officer is the senior, full-

time official.

- 3.4 We are funded by the DHSSPS. For this tax year we have a total budget of £180,000 (about 60p for each of the 300,000 people living in the board's area). Over 80% of our budget is spent on salaries and premises costs. Any increase in our budget must be negotiated with the DHSSPS.
- 3.5 Our offices are located in a central position in Lurgan. Car parking is available at the front of the building which has access for wheelchairs. We encourage people to contact us for advice, information or support on the services. We also have a library of information which organisations, groups or individuals interested in the services can ask for.

4 OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PUBLIC

- 4.1 Every month (except July and August) we meet in public. The meetings are normally held on the third Tuesday of the month at 10.00 am and two meetings per year are held in the evening. We give the details of coming meetings by issue of a press release to all local newspapers. Meetings tend to be held in our offices but in future at least 3 meetings per year will be held in alternative venues across the Southern Board's area and all will be advertised through voluntary and community groups.
- 4.2 If a member of the public wishes to speak on any agenda item this can be arranged by contacting the Council's offices directly. Normally two days notice is required and every effort is made to facilitate the contributor. We can also make arrangements for people with sight or hearing problems if we are asked to do so and given enough notice.
- 4.3 By law we must publish and distribute an annual report which gives

details of our performance during the previous year. Copies of our annual report are issued to the voluntary and public sectors, and to community organisations. Copies are available from public libraries and can be provided in large print, Braille, on disc and on audiotape. The annual report and all other publications are available free of charge.

- 4.4 We must keep to the HSS Executive's Code of Practice on Openness in the HPSS (issued in October 1996). Our members must also keep to the HSS Executive's Code of Conduct for Health and Social Services Council Members (issued December 1996). This code covers matters such as impartiality, financial accountability, confidentiality, discrimination, casual gifts, hospitality and declaring of interests. We keep an up-to-date list of our members' interests and the public may inspect that list.
- 4.5 We have a procedure which allows members of the public to complain about us. A copy of our leaflet 'How to make a Complaint about the Southern Health and Social Services Council' is available from the Council. The Chief Officer is the named person who deals with complaints. Complaints should be directed to:

Mr Seamus Magee
Chief Officer
Southern Health and Social Services Council
Quaker Buildings
LURGAN BT66 8BB

Tel: 028 3834 9900

If you are not satisfied with how your complaint was handled you can refer the matter to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) and ultimately to the Ombudsman (Mr T Frawley, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints, 33

Wellington Place, Belfast BT1 6HN). Our leaflet will be changed to reflect our obligations under section 75 of the act.

5 OUR OBLIGATION UNDER SECTION 75

- 5.1 When carrying out all our functions, duties and powers relating to Northern Ireland we must, under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, promote equal opportunities to all regardless of age, sex, disability, religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, sexuality or any other personal or social circumstance.
- 5.2 We will also promote good relations between people with different religious beliefs, political opinions or from different racial groups when carrying out all our functions, duties and powers relating to Northern Ireland.
- 5.3 We are committed to meeting our Section 75 obligations in all aspects of our work and have determined the following accountability arrangements. Our members will be responsible for deciding how we will achieve this. Statutory responsibility for the effective implementation of this Scheme lies with the Council and its Chairman. However, the Chief Officer will be responsible for introducing arrangements for making sure we meet our obligations and will be accountable to the Council for ensuring that we comply with Section 75 duties. The Chief Officer is also the point of contact for the Equality Commission and he will have a responsibility to liaise with the Commission to ensure progress is made in implementing the commitments given in this Scheme. The point of contact for the Equality Scheme is:

Mr Seamus Magee
Chief Officer
Southern Health & Social Services Council
Quaker Buildings
High Street
Lurgan BT66 8BB
Tel: 028 3834 9900 Fax: 028 3834 9858

The management arrangements put in place to enable us to meet our statutory responsibilities and to conduct our business are illustrated in Appendix 1 (Organisation Chart).

5.4 We are fully committed to the development and delivery of a planned programme of communication and training on the Equality Scheme to promote Section 75. All our Council members and staff will be trained to ensure we meet our obligations.

5.5 The Research Officer, Complaints Officer and Office Manager will be personally responsible for implementing the Equality Scheme within their areas of responsibility and for providing assurance to the Chief Officer that they are complying with the Section 75 obligations as laid down in the Scheme.

6 ARRANGEMENTS FOR MAKING SURE WE MEET OUR OBLIGATIONS

6.1 In order to make sure we meet our statutory obligations under section 75 the Chief Officer will keep us informed of our progress in promoting equal opportunities and maintaining good relations by:

- ◆ Making our obligations a clear and vital part of our annual programme of work; and
- ◆ Giving us a report every three months.

6.2 Objectives and targets relating to our statutory obligations will be integrated into our annual work programme. Progress on meeting our objectives will be reported on quarterly in writing and in public. Specific objectives and targets relating to the equality duties will also be included in the personal work plans of all staff and these will be subject to appraisal in annual performance reviews.

6.3 Our obligations under the act will in future be part of the screening process we use in deciding our work programme priorities. Soon after we were set up we agreed the following criteria. These have been beneficial in helping us decide our annual programme of work priorities.

- ◆ Is it a **health** or **personal social services issue**?
- ◆ Is there a particular **Northern Ireland dimension**? Would or could the issue be better pursued on a **Northern Ireland regional basis**?
- ◆ Is there a particular **Southern Board dimension**?
- ◆ How **serious** is the issue in terms of the numbers affected, the nature of the problem, the degree of seriousness for those affected and the urgency of the situation?
- ◆ Is the issue likely to **fall by the wayside** if not pursued by us?
- ◆ Could or should **another organisation** take up the issue? If so, would we be unnecessarily duplicating work?
- ◆ Could the issue be addressed through working in partnership with another external organisation(s)?
- ◆ What are the chances of **influencing policy** or practice in the long or short term?
- ◆ Do we have **sufficient resources** to achieve the proposed objectives?
- ◆ Is it an issue that affects **equality of opportunity** for any of the groups designated in section 75 of the act?

6.4 Because there needs to be a fair and consistent approach in Northern Ireland we and the other three health and social services councils have agreed to set up a Section 75 Scrutiny Committee.

This committee will be made up of chairmen and chief officers of the four health and social services councils and will meet every two months. It will be a subcommittee of the Executive Committee of the Northern Ireland Association of Health and Social Services Councils. It will be responsible for:

- ◆ reviewing and monitoring progress in meeting the obligation under section 75;
- ◆ making sure that all health and social services councils meet their obligation under section 75 in a fair and consistent way;
- ◆ meeting with representatives from the 9 specified groups;
- ◆ developing, sharing and highlighting best practice;
- ◆ arranging and approving training programmes for members and staff.
- ◆ considering policies for regional impact assessments;
- ◆ agreeing on mechanisms for effective and genuine consultation; and
- ◆ working with the Equality Commission.

6.5 The chairmen of the health and social services councils will take it in turn to be chairman and the Chief Officer of each Council will prepare a bi-monthly report detailing progress on implementation of the Section 75 obligation.

6.6 We will set up a Reference Group with membership from the nine groups to assist us with policy screening, impact assessments and consultation. We will meet this group at least twice annually.

6.7 We will also ensure that our staff appraisal system for all staff includes a section on compliance with section 75 of the act. All job descriptions for senior staff will be amended to reflect the importance of and the need for a commitment to equality of opportunity and good relations.

7 CARRYING OUT OUR DUTIES

7.1 When carrying out our duties we must do the following;

- constantly review the work of the services in our area and recommend any improvements that are needed.
- work with the board to draw up an annual programme of work;
- Give the DHSSPS an annual report on the performance of our work and publicise the report.
- Inspect any premises controlled by the board or trust except where paragraph 19 (a) and (b) of the regulations apply.

7.2 For us to carry out our duties the board must do the following.

- Comment publicly on our annual report and explain the steps they have taken to deal with the issues raised.
- Make sure they have proper arrangements in place for consulting us on any major development in or changes to the services. Any restrictions to this duty are set out in regulation 17, paragraphs (2) (3) (4).
- Give us any information we may reasonably need to carry out our duties.
- Have a meeting with us at least once a year to discuss areas of interest and concern.

7.3 For us to carry out our duties the DHSSPS must do the following.

- Consult us in the way set out in regulation 17, paragraph (4).
- Ask the board to consult us further if appropriate.
- Act as an arbiter between the board and us to settle any disputes over the release of information.

7.4 We follow policies set by external organisations including the

DHSSPS, the board and trusts within the Southern Board's area. We believe that a public authority which introduces a policy has a responsibility for making sure that it promotes equal opportunities and good relations. We will work in partnership with these organisations to monitor and where indicated impact assess all proposed policies and plans from these organisations to make sure the statutory obligations under section 75 have been followed. In any decision with respect to an adopted or proposed policy, we will take account of any impact assessment or consultation in relation to that policy. In responding to consultations on proposed policy changes the promotion of equal opportunities and good relations will be central to our response.

8 PROMOTING GOOD RELATIONS

8.1 We will develop a policy to promote good relations linked to our function. The policy will apply to all our staff and members of our Council. It will be based around the three principles of equity (equality of access to resources), respecting diversity (recognition, understanding and tolerance of difference) and interdependence (obligations and commitment to others). In carrying out our functions we will respect diversity both inside and outside the organisation and will manage diversity in a constructive and productive way. Differences will be respected and valued and there will be freedom and encouragement to discuss sensitive issues in a non-threatening manner. In developing, implementing and monitoring our good relations policy we will liaise with the Community Relations Council.

9 ARRANGEMENTS FOR ASSESSING OUR PERFORMANCE

9.1 Over a three-year period we will assess how each of our policies contributes to the promotion of equal opportunities and good relations. We will do this by following a process known as 'impact

assessment'. Details of the methods we will use are set out in section 12. We will keep to the timetable in appendix 3 as far as is possible and we will consult at least all the organisations listed in appendix 5.

- 9.2 Within one year of the Scheme's approval we will conduct an internal audit to determine the state of relations within the Council. We will also undertake an external audit to find out how we are perceived by those with different religious beliefs, political opinions or racial groups. We will act on the outcome of these audits to introduce policies and procedures to support positive indicators and will redress deficiencies at once.
- 9.3 We will conduct an annual review of progress made in implementing the arrangements specified in our Equality Scheme and in complying with the statutory duties. This will be a core element of our own annual report. We will also include a detailed report of any screening exercises carried out in the preceding year and a timetable for conducting future impact assessments agreed following consultation. We will send our annual statement to the Equality Commission to assist them in producing their own annual report. The annual review will assist in the compilation of the five-year review which will be made available to the public.
- 9.4 We will consult the Equality Commission and the Community Relations Council on issues relevant to meeting our obligation under section 75. If either organisation proposes improvements we will respond in a positive way.
- 9.5 We will investigate all complaints that we have not fulfilled our legal obligation and will try to settle the complaint at a local level. If a complainant needs support to complain about us we will make this available. We will acknowledge all complaints within two working days and give a full response within 20 working days. Everyone

who complains will receive a copy of our complaint's procedure and written details of how to bring a complaint to the attention of the Equality Commission. Complaints should be directed to:

Mr Seamus Magee
Southern Health and Social Services Council
Quaker Buildings
Lurgan
Co Armagh BT66 8BB.
Tel: 028 3834 9900

Details of all complaints will be included in our annual report.

- 9.6 We will review our equality Scheme within five years of sending it to the Equality Commission. The review will assess our performance in meeting our legal obligation under section 75. We will consult at least all the organisations listed in appendix 5 and others which are identified in the meantime. We will send a report on the review to the Equality Commission.

10 SCREENING OUR POLICIES

- 10.1 We will consider all current and proposed policies to see whether any of these require an impact assessment. Our policies may sometimes be considered by all four Health and Social Services Councils jointly. This will ensure a fair and consistent approach is adopted across Northern Ireland. This process will be assisted by the Reference Group and will be overseen by the Scrutiny Committee.
- 10.2 We are committed to consulting on both the actual and likely impact on equality of opportunity of all existing and proposed policies. We will consult the Equality Commission and specific groups who have a direct interest in the policy. This will include those directly

affected by the policy whether they have a direct economic or personal interest. We will also consult at least the groups and organisations listed in Appendix 5. Consultation will be conducted as set out in Section 13 below.

10.3 We will screen each policy against the following criteria:

- a) Is there any evidence of higher or lower use of services by different groups?
- b) Is there any evidence that different groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular policy?
- c) Is there any opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations by altering the policy or working with others in Government or the community at large?
- d) Have consultations with relevant representatives, organisations or individuals within groups indicated that particular policies create problems that are specific to them?

If the answer to any of these questions is 'yes' we will consider whether the policy requires an impact assessment.

10.4 In prioritising policies for impact assessment, consultation and action we will take the following factors into account.

- Those which target health and social needs.
- Those which promote 'social inclusion' (that is, policies which aim to give everyone equal access to services).
- Those which affect people's lives.
- Those which affect people's human rights, for example, their dignity, privacy, rights and access to services.

We will review and add to this list.

- 10.5 We will conduct a two-stage consultation exercise involving both written and face to face communication. The first stage will identify our policies and seek views on issues such as whether all policies have been identified, how they affect the relevant groups in terms of equality of opportunity and the priority which should be given to the impact assessments that are considered necessary. The aim of the consultation will be to engage fully with the relevant groups in explaining, discussing and eliciting views.
- 10.6 In respect of the first stage consultation we have not screened out any policies but have considered that all may require an impact assessment. All written comments and concerns expressed during the first stage consultation will be taken into account during the second stage consultation.
- 10.7 The second stage of the process will involve us consulting on the conclusions reached, taking into account the comments, views and wishes of the representative organisations obtained at the first stage of the process. This paper will set out our conclusions on the equality implications of each policy against the four screening criteria, the rationale for conclusions on policies which we do not propose for impact assessment and an impact assessment timetable. We will work in collaboration with the other three Health and Social Services Councils in arriving at our conclusions. The second stage process may also be taken forward in conjunction with other health and social services organisations in Northern Ireland.
- 10.8 Both consultation stages will require 8 weeks for actual consultation and a further 4 weeks to consider the results of the consultation and if necessary the preparation of further documents.

10.9 The report submitted to the Equality Commission in June 2001 will include the impact assessment timetable arrived at after consultation. It will also detail those policies or policy proposed by consultees as appropriate for impact assessment and which policies proposed by those consulted as appropriate for impact assessment have not been included and why.

11 TIMETABLE FOR SETTING PRIORITIES

11.1 After considering all our policies we will decide which need a full impact assessment. This decision will be made jointly with the other three Health and Social Services Councils. A timetable for conducting impact assessments will be drawn up as part of the second stage of screening.

12 METHODS OF CARRYING OUT IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

12.1 In identifying policies which will be subject to equality impact assessment we will consider existing policies, both written and unwritten, and will also look at any new policies which are proposed during the term of the Scheme. We will consider the impact using the criteria set out in paragraph 10.3 above of each policy on equality of opportunity in terms of the nine categories listed in Section 75 of the Act.

We will also do the following when carrying out impact assessments.

- We will examine the information we currently collect to make sure we have enough accurate information to make decisions.
- We will examine any similar information that is available from elsewhere in the UK, the Republic of Ireland or the EC. We will approach other organisations which provide similar services.

- We will consult the organisations listed in appendix 5 and make any relevant documents available.
- We will ask the following questions about each particular policy:
 - Is there direct discrimination?
 - Does the policy have a negative effect on people's rights, resources, access or values?
 - If the policy is not unlawful, is any unfairness justified?
 - Are there equal opportunities?
 - We will consider whether any alternative policies are available.
 - We will consider how we could justify any negative effect and promote equal opportunities.
 - We will state how we intend to monitor negative effects which may arise in the future.
 - We will publish the results of all impact assessments.

These steps may alter or be added to over time. When carrying out impact assessments we will follow Annex 1 of the Equality Commission's Guidelines as well as any practical guidance issued by the Commission.

13 FUTURE CONSULTATIONS

13.1 In consulting on any matter to which this Scheme relates, we will work with representative groups and individuals of the Section 75 categories in order to identify how best to obtain their views. This may involve face to face meetings, advisory groups, surveys, consultative panels, citizen juries and other innovative ways of working. There will be different means of consultation for different groups and it will be important to establish the basis for dialogue and engagement during the life of the Scheme.

13.2 In addition to the actions outlined in section 16 of the Scheme we

intend to reduce barriers to proper consultation by ensuring that the language we use is as clear as possible. This Scheme is also available on request in large print, Braille, audio cassette, Irish and Chinese. We will ensure that systems are in place to make such formats available in a timely fashion. The Scheme was also approved for clarity by the Plain English Campaign. Presentations on this Scheme, if requested, will be made in an appropriate format to representatives of people with learning disabilities, minority language speakers, those whose hearing is impaired, young people and Travellers. We will draw on the outcome of a number of conferences to give specific attention to and look for innovative models for engaging young people and people with learning disabilities.

- 13.3 We will consult the public, consumer organisations, charities and the voluntary and community sectors on all impact assessments. Our consultations will be timely, open and inclusive in accordance with the Equality Commission's Guiding Principles. We will work to ensure there are no real or perceived barriers to consultation. We will make resources available for individuals and groups to assist in making consultation genuine. When planning consultations we will give consideration to time of day, venues, accessibility of venues, use of language, interpreters, childcare and transport. We will consult representative groups on the findings and recommendations of each impact assessment prior to implementation.
- 13.4 We will continue to consult on many areas of our work, including our annual programme of work, responses to reviews and changes the board, trusts and other organisations propose to make to services. We will consult the organisations listed in appendix 5. This list will be updated and amended in the light of experience but will include the Equality Commission, the Community Relations Council, voluntary, community and trade

union groups and organisations representing the various categories included in Section 75. This approach will apply in respect of all consultations.

- 13.5 In order to ensure the groups we are consulting with have sufficient time to respond we will normally allow three months for consultation. We will start consultation with all interest groups at the earliest possible opportunity. However, there may be times when this is not possible because the public authority responsible for changing or introducing a policy has restricted its consultation period. The Council will monitor and keep under review such conditions and report on them in its annual review report, which will be provided to the Equality Commission.
- 13.6 Information will be made available to ensure meaningful consultation. This will include quantitative and qualitative data which the Council holds or has collated and other documents such as consultants' reports.
- 13.7 We will arrange specific training for Council staff engaged in consultation exercises to ensure that those facilitating consultations have the necessary skills to communicate effectively. Training will be developed in consultation with affected groups.
- 13.8 We will draw, in particular, on the outcome of the conference organised by the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) on practical issues in carrying out future consultations in the context of Section 75 obligations. This included inputs from representatives of groups which have traditionally been marginalised. It also addressed the special difficulties in consulting children on policy issues in which they have an interest. In developing new approaches in this area we will seek advice from the Equality Commission and learn lessons from other jurisdictions.

13.9 In organising consultation meetings or other events we will aim to ensure full participation taking account of the needs and customs of different groups. In particular, we will consider the time of day, the appropriateness of the venue, whether it can be accessed by those with disabilities, how the meeting is to be run, the use of appropriate language, whether a signer is necessary and the provision of childcare.

14 MONITORING THE EFFECT OF OUR POLICIES AND PUBLISHING IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

14.1 We will put in place a system to ensure that every year we will monitor the effect our policies have on the people section 75 applies to. We will publicise the results of our impact assessment by sending out press releases. The results will also be given in our annual report and the yearly report we give to the Equality Commission.

14.2 We recognise that the baseline data we currently collect is insufficient for monitoring purposes. We will take steps to ensure this is enhanced and will consult relevant groups to assist us in the process.

14.3 We consider it particularly important that sufficient, timely and appropriate information is made available to give all affected groups and individuals an opportunity to consider the full implications of our proposals. We will take steps to ensure this happens. We will tell organisations listed in appendix 5 what information we hold. All our information will be available free of charge and can be obtained by contacting our offices at:

Southern Health & Social Services Council
Quaker Buildings
High Street
Lurgan
Co Armagh BT66 8BB.

Phone: 028 3834 9900

Minicom: 028 3834 6488

E-mail: admin.shssc@dnet.co.uk

Information will also be available in accessible formats, as detailed in paragraphs 13.2 and 17.2.

- 14.4 If our monitoring and assessment shows that any one of our policies or services has a greater negative effect on any particular group or if we could do more to promote equal opportunities, we will make sure that the policy is revised as soon as possible.
- 14.5 In some cases an equality impact assessment may identify an anticipated differential impact on particular groups within the Section 75 categories. Assuming that no alternative policy is feasible steps will be taken, wherever possible, to **mitigate** such anticipated adverse impact. The Council may, in these circumstances, commission special monitoring and analysis to confirm the extent of adverse impact and / or the success of any mitigating measures. Information collected in this special monitoring will be taken into account in any future review of the policy.
- 14.6 We will make publicly available the outcome of any equality impact assessment and of any monitoring undertaken in relation to adverse impacts. The material will be accessible on the Council's website (currently being developed). It will also be available in

printed forms and accessible formats in accordance with the Equality Commissions Guidelines.

- 14.7 We will inform the general public about the availability of this material through press releases and press publications. We will also directly inform bodies listed in Appendix 5 when this material is available. We will also place information in specialist publications associated with Section 75 categories. In particular, we will take steps to ensure that young people and people with learning disabilities are adequately informed.
- 14.8 When we publish documentation on an equality impact assessment it will include:
- The aims of the policy to which the assessment relates
 - All relevant quantitative and qualitative data including consultants' reports and any other information linked to or associated with the impact assessment or decisions taken.
 - Details of any consideration given to mitigate any adverse impact of the policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and
 - Details of any consideration given to alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity.

15 TRAINING

- 15.1 We will allocate the necessary resources (in terms of people, time and money) to ensure that the statutory duties are complied with and that our Equality Scheme is drawn up and implemented effectively and on time. A programme has already been initiated to communicate to, and train staff and members, about the requirements of the statutory obligations and how the equality agenda can be actively promoted.

15.2 We will draw up a detailed training plan for all our staff and members over the five year period to which the Scheme refers, which will aim to achieve the following objectives.

- To raise awareness of current anti-discrimination legislation, including the provisions of Section 75, Schedule 9 and Section 76 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This will include an explanation of the duties and their implications for all employees.
- To provide staff involved in the screening of policies with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this effectively.
- To provide staff involved in the equality impact assessment of policies with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.
- To provide staff who deal with complaints about the implementation of the Council's Scheme, with the necessary skills and knowledge to investigate and monitor complaints effectively.
- To provide staff involved in the consultation process with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.
- To provide staff involved in the implementation and monitoring of the effective implementation of the Council's Scheme to do this work effectively.
- To evaluate the extent to which all participants in this training programme have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve each of the above objectives.

15.3 Within one year of the approval of this Scheme all staff and

members will be trained. All new staff and members will be trained on the requirements of Section 75 and this Equality Scheme at induction stage.

15.4 We will also assess the need for specialised training in communicating with and understanding the needs of traditionally marginalised groups. Such training will include input from appropriate external specialists.

15.5 We will develop our training plan in consultation with representatives of the Section 75 groups and will include input from appropriate external specialists.

15.6 Copies of this Scheme will be made available to all our staff and members.

16 PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SERVICES

16.1 We are committed to communicating with the public in a clear and effective way. We realise that sections of the population do not enjoy equality of opportunity in accessing information made available by us and we will develop a system to monitor this. For this reason we will publish information in other languages, large print and audio tape as set out in paragraphs 13.2 and 17.2. Excluded groups often include:

- Children and young people who may have difficulty in accessing or understanding information.
- People with sensory and learning disabilities who may have particular difficulties with information in print.
- Members of minority ethnic group, whose first language is not English and who may have difficulties with information provided only in English.

- 16.2 We will improve the arrangements we make to communicate with people requiring special attention and in doing so we will seek the help of representatives of the groups concerned.
- 16.3 We will consider how best to communicate information to young people and those with learning disabilities and will use methods which are appropriate. Innovative approaches used elsewhere will also be utilised.
- 16.4 We recognise the problems that many small local groups face in providing a considered response to detailed and complex policy proposals. We consider it particularly important that sufficient, timely and appropriate information is provided to enable local groups to consider the full implications of proposals and will take steps to ensure that this is provided.
- 16.5 When we give information to the local and regional press we will make sure that all our press statements, articles and advertisements are made available to all newspapers and journals. We will also target specific publications for the people section 75 applies to. In disseminating information through the local press we will ensure that public advertisements are carried in all three daily newspapers.
- 16.6 Our offices are open to the public each day from 9.00 am to 4.30 pm. We keep to all relevant parts of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. (see paragraph 3.5 for access details).

17 PUBLISHING OUR EQUALITY SCHEME

- 17.1 We will make sure our equality Scheme is widely publicised in a way which will give everyone access to it. We will proactively advertise the availability of our Scheme in local newspapers, make it available on our website (currently being developed) and

distribute it to all the groups representing the categories in Section 75. It will also be made available to Council staff and members and all those listed in appendix 5.

17.2 The equality Scheme will be made available to any group, organisation or person free of charge. We can provide different formats if there is a demand for them. These other formats will include:

- on audio tape;
- on disc;
- by e-mail;
- in large print;
- in other languages (for example Irish, Chinese, Urdu); and
- in Braille.

17.3 We will work with specific groups and avail of their expertise in communicating our Scheme directly to children, people with learning disabilities and their carers. A number of different groups including MENCAP, VOYPIC and NIPPA will be approached for help.

18 CONCLUSION

We are fully committed to meeting our obligations under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. We look forward to a new era of working proactively and in partnership with a whole range of organisations in pursuit of equality.

S Magee
May 2001

HOW WE CONSULTED ON OUR DRAFT SCHEME

A number of steps were taken to ensure as many groups and organisations as possible had an opportunity to comment on our draft scheme. The following steps were taken:

- a The availability of the draft scheme was published in the Belfast Telegraph on 27 April and Irish News and the News Letter on 28 April 2000.
- b The draft scheme was sent to all the organisations and groups listed in appendix 5 . A copy of our guide '**Replying to Consultative Documents – A Guide to Making your Voice Heard**' was also sent to all of these organisations. 500 copies of our guide were also distributed as an insert in the newsletter of Community Development and Health Network (NI).
- c Northern Ireland's four Health and Social Services Councils in conjunction with Community Development and Health Network (NI) organised a half-day seminar. We invited all the voluntary and community groups known to us. The seminar was held in the Oaklin House Hotel, Dungannon on 19 May 2000. Mr Paul Noonan of the Equality Commission gave an overview of the statutory duties and Seamus Magee, Chief Officer of the Southern Health and Social Services Council presented an overview of the Councils' draft schemes. This was followed by 4 separate workshops where the following two questions were addressed.
 - ◆ What aspects of the Councils' draft schemes need to be amended to ensure compliance with section 75 of the statutory duty?
 - ◆ What changes do the Councils need to undertake to ensure they promote equality of opportunity and promote good relations?

45 delegates attended our seminar. It was agreed that issues identified and highlighted at the seminar could be regarded as oral responses to our consultation.

- d A further letter inviting comments on our draft scheme was sent to all voluntary and community organisations listed in appendix 5 on 25 May 2000. The letter served as a reminder that the closing date for comments on our draft scheme was 16 June 2000. It also offered one to one consultations on our draft scheme.
- e A press release inviting comments on our draft scheme was issued to all newspapers in our area on 17 April 2000. This received widespread coverage.
- f Our draft scheme was also discussed at a meeting of the Ethnic Minorities Access

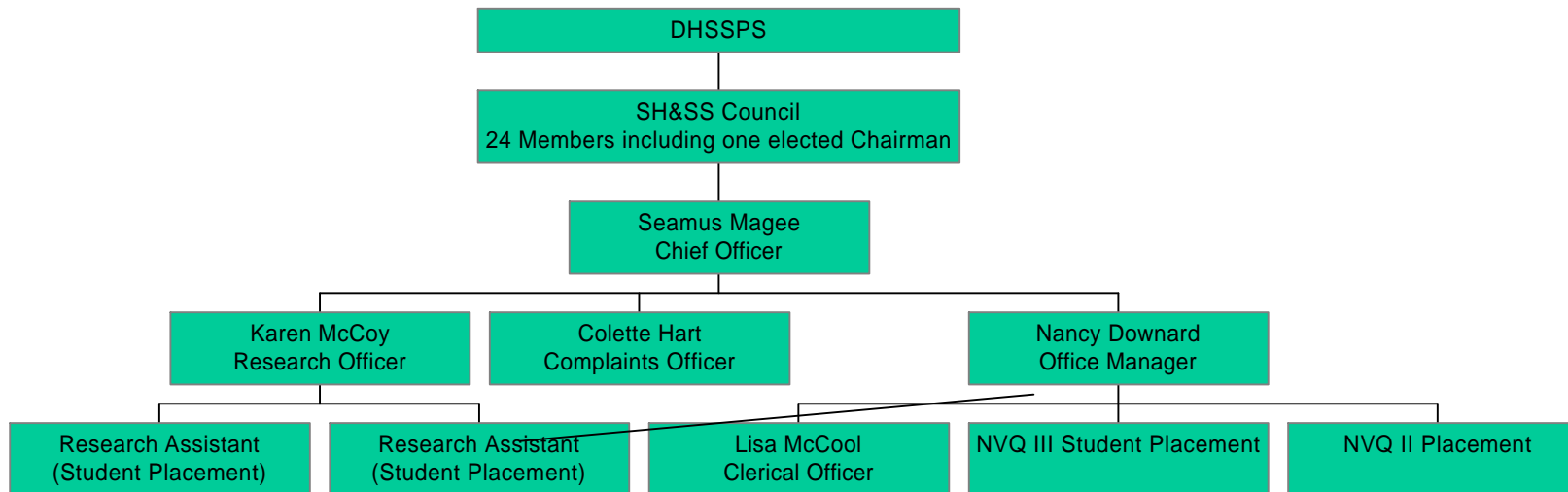
to Health Group on 14 June 2000.

- g No requests were received to supply our draft scheme in alternative formats.
- h Suggestions for improving the layout and content of our scheme have been made where appropriate.

We have attached copies of all relevant correspondence.

Southern Health & Social

Organisational Chart



POLICIES WHICH WILL BE SCREENED FOR IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Listed below are all the policies identified which relate to our work. They are not listed in any particular order. Consultation on which of our policies should be screened for impact assessment will begin in October 2000. Members of the Reference Group will be asked to assist in the screening process and all relevant interest groups will be consulted.

- ◆ Developing and agreeing our annual work programme
- ◆ Identifying issues for research
- ◆ Commissioning external/internal research
- ◆ Responding to consultative documents
- ◆ Advising and supporting complainants
- ◆ Monitoring complaints
- ◆ Staff recruitment
- ◆ Procuring goods and services
- ◆ Holding Council meetings in public
- ◆ Publication of our annual report
- ◆ Visiting health care facilities
- ◆ Publications
- ◆ Council membership
- ◆ Liaison with voluntary and community sector
- ◆ Links with other health and social care organisations

PROPOSED TIMETABLE

The following timetable summarises the actions we propose to take.

Year 1 Sept 2000 – June 2001

Identify all policies

Screen policies for possible impact assessment – consult widely

Consider how best to gather and collate data

Carry out agreed impact assessments

Consult how best to monitor the effect of our policies on equal opportunities

Review our arrangements for providing information to the public

Train our staff and members

Conduct a Review of progress made in implementing the arrangements specified in our Equality Scheme and in complying with the statutory duties.

Produce our annual report for the Equality Commission

Year 2 July 2001 – June 2002

Carry out further impact assessments

Conduct a Review of progress made in implementing the arrangements specified in our Equality Scheme and in complying with the statutory duties.

Produce our annual report for the Equality Commission.

Year 3 July 2002 – June 2003

Carry out further impact assessments

Conduct a Review of progress made in implementing the arrangements specified in our Equality Scheme and in complying with the statutory duties.

Produce our annual report for the Equality Commission

Year 4 July 2003 – July 2004

Carry out further impact assessments

Conduct a Review of progress made in implementing the arrangements specified in our Equality Scheme and in complying with the statutory duties.

Produce our annual report for the Equality Commission

Begin planning for review of our equality scheme

Year 5 July 2004 – June 2005

Carry out further impact assessments

Conduct a Review of progress made in implementing the arrangements specified in our Equality Scheme and in complying with the statutory duty

Produce our annual report for the Equality Commission

Review our equality scheme

TRAINING PLAN

All staff and members of our Council will be trained on promoting equality of opportunity and good relations. Initial training will be completed within 6 months of the scheme being approved. In addition, the Chairman and Vice Chairman and senior staff will receive more focused, in-depth and ongoing training. Training, where appropriate, will be arranged with the other three Health and Social Services Councils. Members of the Reference Group will have a key role in training and will be asked to identify suitable trainers. A number of organisations including VOYPIC (Voice of Young People in Care) and the Community Relations Training Learning Consortium will be commissioned to assist our Council with training.

Type of Training	Methods of Training	Groups	Timing
Awareness of our statutory responsibilities under Section 75 and Schedule 9 Initial good relations training	Presentations Staff meetings Role play Development of induction pack	Current members and all staff New members and staff	Within 6 months of the scheme's approval
Focused training on our Equality Scheme and its implications	Workshops Specific presentations	Chairman and Vice Chairman	Ongoing cyclical training
Integration of the scheme into work programme and attitudinal training	Training courses Focus groups	Senior staff	
Advanced good relations training	Presentations Role play	All members and staff	
Consultation skills	Workshops Seminars Training Courses	Senior Staff	Annual and regular refresher courses as appropriate

SHSSC CONSULTATION LIST

The following organisations and groups will be consulted in respect of the Council's Section 75 Obligations. The list will be amended and updated in light of experience.

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Community Relations Council

Professional Organisations

British Medical Association
Royal College of General Practitioners
British Nursing Association
Royal College of Nursing
National Board for Nursing and Midwifery
British Association of Social Workers
Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work
British Dental Association
British Dietetic Association
Northern Ireland College of Occupational Therapists
Northern Ireland Board Chartered Society of Physiotherapists
Northern Ireland Branch of the Society of Radiographers
Society of Chiropodists
College of Speech & Language Therapists
British Orthoptist Department
Department of Health & Social Services & Public Safety

Boards, Trusts

Western Health and Social Services Board
Eastern Health and Social Services Board
Southern Health and Social Services Board
Northern Health and Social Services Board
Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust
Craigavon Area Hospital Group Trust
Armagh & Dungannon HSS Trust
Craigavon & Banbridge Community HSS Trust
Newry & Mourne HSS Trust
Royal Group of Hospitals and Dental Hospital HSS Trust
Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust
Mater Infirmorum HSS Trust
Down Lisburn HSS Trust
Green Park Healthcare Trust
North and West Belfast HSS Trust
Ulster Community and Hospitals Trust
South & East Belfast HSS Trust
Armagh GP Commissioning Pilot

GP Forums in Southern Board's Area
Local Medical Committee
Community Health Forums

Elderly

Age Concern Northern Ireland
Help the Aged, Northern Ireland
Newry & Mourne Senior Citizens' Consortium

Alzheimer's Disease Society Northern Ireland
The Salvation Army
Carers National Association Ltd
Crossroads Care
Northern Ireland Hospice
Homecare
University of the Third Age
Forkhill Senior Citizen's Club
Extra Care
Provincial Care Services
Senior Citizen's Clubs

Counselling

CRUSE Bereavement
Home Mission Society
RESPOND
ACCORD

Students

NUS USI - Northern Ireland Student Care
Lifestart

Children

Catholic Family Care Society (Northern Ireland)
Northern Ireland Foster Care Association
ADOPT
Northern Ireland Pre-school Playgroups Association
PAPA
Children's Promise
Centre for Child Care Research
Homestart
Newry Adolescent Partnership
Putting Children First
Child Care Northern Ireland
NSPCC
Barnardos
Children's Law Centre
Save the Children
Child Poverty Action Group (Northern Ireland)
Youth Council for Northern Ireland
National Deaf Children's Society
Remember Our Child
National Childbirth Trust
Northern Ireland Childminding Association
PLAYBOARD
Parents' Advice Centre
LACUNA
Child Accident Prevention Trust
Include Youth
Young Parents Network Rural Development
Focus on Family
Youth Action (Northern Ireland)
Childhood Fund Support Service
WAVE
First Key (Northern Ireland)
Treetops
Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency

Ethnic Minorities

Chinese Welfare Association
Indian Community Centre
Multi-Cultural Resource Centre
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM)
Traveller Movement Northern Ireland
Northern Ireland African Cultural Centre

Sex/Sexual Orientation

Coalition on Sexual Orientation (CoSO)
The Rainbow Project
Carafriend
Gay and Lesbian Youth Northern Ireland
Lesbian Line
NIGRA (Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association)
Queer Space

Women's Groups

Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation
Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP)
Women's Information Group
Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA)
Women's Support Network
Newry & Mourne Women
Gingerbread Northern Ireland
Women's Forum Northern Ireland
Women's Aid - Newry
Women's Health Institute

Physical Disability/Sensory Impairment/Learning Disability

Disability Action
MENCAP
British Deaf Association (Northern Ireland)
Royal National Institute for the Blind (Northern Ireland)
Royal National Institute for Deaf People (Northern Ireland)
Blind Centre
Northern Ireland Director of Multiple Sclerosis
British Epilepsy Association
Northern Ireland Chest, Heart & Stroke Association
Multiple Sclerosis Society
Asthma Society
British Diabetic Association
Disabled Drivers Association
Parkinson's Disease Society
Muscular Dystrophy Group
Arthritis Care
Parents and Professionals and Autism
Down's Syndrome Association
The Guide dogs for the Blind Association
Sense Northern Ireland
The Cedar Foundation (formerly NICOD)
Gateway Club
Committee for Employment of Disabled Persons
Action MS
Action for Dysphasic Adults

Society for Speech Impaired
Amputees Association of Northern Ireland
British Sport Association for the Disabled (BSAD)
Bryson House the Charity
PHAB

Mental Health

Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health
Mental Health Commission for Northern Ireland
National Schizophrenia Fellowship
Alcoholics Anonymous
Council for the Homeless
Society of St Vincent de Paul
Industrial Therapy Organisation
Simon Community
Aware - Defeat Depression
Action Mental Health
Newry & Mourne Mental Health Forum
PROSPECTS
United Response
Northern Ireland Council on Alcohol
CAUSE for Mental Health
BRIDGE

Voluntaries

Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)
Ulster Cancer Foundation
Action Cancer
Cancer Relief (Macmillan Fund)
Cancer Research Campaign
Marie Curie Cancer Centre

General

Northern Ireland Hospital Advisory Service
Central Services Agency
Registered Nursing Home Association
The Northern Ireland Health Promotion Agency
Regional Director, NIHE
Health & Healthcare Research Unit
Northern Ireland Association of Citizens Advice Bureau
Southern Education & Library Board
The Beeches Management Centre
Northern Ireland Home Safety Council
Home Accident Prevention Council
British Red Cross Society
Department of Nursing & Midwifery, QUB
Department of Nursing, UUU
The Northern Ireland Regional Medical Physics Agency
The Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Services Agency
Northern Ireland Voluntary Development Agency
Registration & Inspection Unit (Southern Area)
Mourne Stimulus
Confederation of Community Groups
Welfare Rights Project
Newry Volunteer Bureau
Newry Technology Centre
Newry & Mourne Carers Association

Craigavon & Banbridge Carers Association
Portadown Carers Association
Hilltown Community Association
Meigh Community Association
Annalong Community Association
Newry Family Resource Centre
Newry & Mourne District Partnership
ROSA
Challenge
United Response
ROMAL
Central Mourne Community Association
Donard Commissioning Group
NEXUS
Mid-Ulster Women's Network
Family Planning Association Northern Ireland
Carers National Association Northern Ireland
Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ)
Rural Community Network
Employers' Forum on Disability
Equality Forum Northern Ireland
Community Relations Council (CRC)
The Equality Unit
The Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland (LGSC)
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC)
Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)
Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards
Community Relations Training/Learning Consortium
Association of Chief Officers of Voluntary Associations (ACOVO)
Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network
Community Development and Health Network (Northern Ireland)
OMI Consultancy
Northern Ireland Home Safety Council
Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
Community Relations Council
Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation
Belfast Central Mission
RELATE
NIACRO
Extern
Aids Helpline Northern Ireland
ASBAH
Cystic Fibrosis Trust
Huntington's Disease Association
ME Association
Threshold
Simon Community

Housing Associations

Oaklee Housing Association
Habinteg Housing Association
Northern Ireland Housing Association - Southern Area
Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health
PRAXIS
Church of Ireland Housing Association
FOLD

Churches

Church of Ireland
Methodist
Presbyterian
Roman Catholic
Free Presbyterian

MP's

Mr E McGrady
Mr S Mallon
Mr D Trimble
Mr J Donaldson

Assembly Members

Paul Berry
John Fee
Danny Kennedy
Pat McNamee
Conor Murphy
Mervyn Carrick
Dara O'Hagan
Brid Rodgers
George Savage
Denis Watson

District Councils

Armagh City & District Council
Newry & Mourne District Council
Banbridge District Council
Dugannon & South Tyrone Borough Council
Craigavon Borough Council

Trade Unions

Northern Ireland Committee - Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NIC - ICTU)
Unison
Manufacturing, Science & Finance Union
Union of Construction, Allied Trades (Northern Ireland) Branch
Union of Speech Therapies
Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance
Amalgamated Transport & General Worker's Union
Amalgamated Engineering & Electrical Union
General, Municipal, Boilermakers