

**Southern Health and Social Services Council**  
**Annual Report on Equality Scheme Progress April 2002- March 2003**

**Feedback report from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland**

**Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Equality Duties**

- Good progress is evident in the continued implementation of a strategic and partnership approach to the Section 75 duties.
- The Commission notes the inclusion of Section 75 obligations in performance objectives for Council staff.
- We welcome the development of resources and services which facilitate progress on the implementation of the good relations duty.

**Screening and Equality Impact Assessment**

- In common with the Health sector, the Council is collaborating on a region-wide EQIA programme.
- We note that the Council continues to screen all new policies for equality implications. The Commission looks forward to an update, in your next report, on any EQIAs which may emanate from the screening process.

**Training and Communication**

- The Progress Report outlines sustained progress in training provision in the reporting period, both at an awareness level, and at a more specialist level for specific staff.
- Consultation with and involvement of Section 75 constituencies in the development of training yields benefits for public authorities and Section 75 groups.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

- We note the collaborative approach taken by the HSS sector in respect of the collection and analysis of data.

- The Commission endorses the utilisation of research, surveys, census and other data, in conjunction with consultation, to inform policy development.
- We welcome monitoring initiatives which seek to capture data on all S75 categories.
- The Commission is initiating a project on the development of monitoring guidance in relation to S75.

### **Information Provision and Access to Services**

- We note that the Council intends to re-issue information posters and leaflets. We anticipate that the Council will commit to the provision of information in alternative formats.
- Your report outlines initiatives undertaken to improve the accessibility of information and services.

### **Complaints**

- The Commission notes that the Council has established a S75 complaints procedure and appropriate monitoring systems. Lack of complaints noted.
- The Commission has cited in its overall report, the work undertaken by health bodies within the Southern Board area, on a Good Practice Review of Complaints Procedures.

### **Timetable**

- The Commission notes progress on the implementation of the Council's Equality Scheme timetable and looks forward to reporting of details of further outcomes arising from its implementation in the next report.

### **Consultation**

- The Commission notes that the Southern Area Joint Master Consultation list has been reviewed and consultees asked for preferences for consultation methodologies. We welcome the adoption of a collaborative approach to consultation.

### **Impacts and Outcomes**

- The Commission notes and welcomes the development of guidance for managers on screening of policies for equality implications.
- The Commission welcomes the sharing of good practice initiatives with other public bodies to realise positive outcomes for S75 groups.
- The types of outcomes desired by the processes emanating from the statutory duties are difficult to obtain in the short term, and it may be the case that the number of direct positive impacts for S75 groups will increase as ongoing projects are progressed and EQIAs are completed.

### **Additional Information**

- The Commission welcomes your commitment to the implementation of the Section 75 duties as evidenced by the progress you have made and the examples of good practice contained in your report. We would encourage the four Health and Social Services Councils to work together in the implementation of the statutory duties.