

# **Five Year Review of NIBTS Equality Scheme (April 2021)**

## **How has the scheme's implementation benefitted individuals within the Section 75 groups?**

In relation to the workplace, NIBTS has made progress in identifying and seeking to address the needs of staff and candidates with a disability. Staff awareness days have proved to be effective in increasing awareness, knowledge and skills of staff and line managers in meeting the needs of colleagues with a particular disability. In addition, Tapestry has given a platform to staff who have a disability to raise and discuss disability issues in a safe environment.

For blood donors, important outcomes have included work to ensure the previous blanket ban on gay men donating blood and blood products is removed. Also, NIBTS has attempted to improve good relations between those of different religious persuasions and political backgrounds by increasing the numbers of donation sessions in cross-community venues.

## **How are leaders within the authority engaged in the scheme's implementation?**

NIBTS Head of HR and Corporate Services is the equality lead, acting as the main driver for the equality agenda. Corporate services and HR are responsible for equality screening and development of governance processes to equality proof areas of work.

NIBTS SMT are kept informed of Equality issues at their weekly meetings. SMT are involved in Section 75 implementation in a number of ways:

- annual progress reporting: scrutiny of progress and direction setting for the coming year;
- discussion and where required taking action on Equality Scheme issues brought to the team by the Head of Corporate Services/ HR and the BSO's Equality Unit.

Senior managers play an important role by:

- Contributing to annual progress reporting by identifying relevant initiatives in their area of responsibility
- Undertaking screening of projects and work streams in discussion with and assisted by the Head of HR and Corporate Services
- Ensuring training attendance of relevant staff.

### **Challenges and how they have been overcome and good practice**

The key challenge over the past five years was the integration of equality considerations in all core work of the organisation, which in many ways is the key challenge in implementing Section 75 overall. Whilst it cannot be argued therefore that this challenge was overcome during the period covered by the review, important progress has been made, first and foremost by seeking to integrate equality into structures and processes, both those already in existence and those created primarily for other purposes, such as

- Developing the change control process for major decisions and changes within the organisation, allowing for considerations of equality aspects.
- Ensuring all policies are screened prior to implementation.
- Other areas of good practice include outcomes for staff and applicants, such as the Disability Awareness Days focusing on the lived experience of people within individual equality categories and on how staff can best support their colleagues belonging to these.
- Working alongside our partner Blood Transfusion services in Great Britain, the DoH and voluntary organisations, such as The Rainbow Project, have improved access to services for gay men.

### **Lessons Learned**

#### **(1) Business Planning, Policy- and Decision-Making, and Governance**

- The Business Plan does not currently include any specifics that explicitly relate to producing outcomes to any of the equality groupings. Some are implied in project / work stream areas.

- In relation to project and work stream planning, NIBTS has put in place governance arrangements that have shown some success in progressing the mainstreaming of equality considerations.

## (2) Monitoring, Access to Information and Services

- The quality of the equality data sets that we most need to draw on for our work has significant limitations.

## (3) Engagement

- In order to better gauge how diverse the voices are that we hear in our donor engagement sessions and project groups we will:
  - look at what other Blood Services do in terms of collecting equality/diversity information of service users that are involved
  - engage with a range of organisations from across the Section 75 groups to ensure we have a diverse spectrum of voices
- We will ensure that our Human Resources team engage with the existing staff forums in the development of policies.
- We recognise that we have work to do in engaging with some of the Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups in Northern Ireland.

## (4) Ensuring NIBTS staff assist the organisation in implementing Section 75

- Reference to the Section 75 duties in all Job Descriptions is essential for making equality everybody's business in the organisation.

## (5) Outcomes

- Work to date has seen improvements in equality of opportunity for different groups of staff, including those with dependents, staff with disabilities, and those of a different sexual orientation.
- We still have a lot of work to improve the access to donation services of people whose first language is not English.

- Similar to other regions in the UK, NIBTS also have found it difficult to get BAME donors. We know that this is an important cultural issue and we will use learning from other areas to look at this issue, particularly given the changing demographics of the Northern Ireland population.

## (6) Leadership

- Active Section 75 implementation over the last five years has largely been led by the HR and Corporate Services team in the organisation. While the corporate side is a good fit from a reporting and governance angle it is essential to widen the active ownership of the equality and diversity agenda through further mainstreaming equality in project planning i.e. NIBTS core business.
- Working in close partnership with the other 10 regional HSC organisations through the Equality Forum produces important benefits for small organisations in particular, including access to resources and prompts on deadlines. Likewise, awareness of progress across partner organisations can strengthen arguments of the need to bring about progress in one's own organisation. There remains scope for strengthening of sharing of good practice across the forum to enable the organisations to learn from each other.

## Going Forward

### (1) Business Planning, Policy- and Decision-Making, and Governance

- The development and approval process of policies will include a front page on policy documents and papers indicating whether an equality screening has been done, and by whom.
- We will include more equality specifics in future Business Plans. We will highlight key equality objectives in our plan by specifying for relevant project / work stream areas which equality groupings are likely to particularly benefit from the work.
- The Business Plan for NIBTS will be equality screened each year. This will be shared with relevant senior officers to ensure, where needed, projects and work streams are individually screened.

## (2) Monitoring, Access to Information and Services

- We will further encourage staff to complete equality and diversity information to strengthen the data, e.g. on disability.
- A donor services strategic review will take place to ascertain the needs of our donors and the accessibility of our service. Considerations of collecting further Section 75 data for our donors will be considered here.
- In order to better gauge how diverse the voices are that we hear at our events we will:
  - look at what other HSC organisations do in terms of collecting equality/diversity information at similar events, and
  - benchmark with other HSC organisations what they have done to improve engagement with Section 75 groups.

## (3) Engagement

- In order to better gauge how diverse the voices are that we hear in our donor engagement sessions and project groups we will:
  - look at what other Blood Services do in terms of collecting equality/diversity information of service users that are involved
  - engage with a range of organisations from across the Section 75 groups to ensure we have a diverse spectrum of voices
- We will ensure that our Human Resources team engage with the existing staff forums in the development of policies.
- We will engage with the Polish community and other ethnic groups in Northern Ireland in order to look at translation issues during donation sessions and improve access to blood donation services for these groups.

## (4) Ensuring NIBTS staff assist the organisation in implementing Section 75

- We will ensure that our Human Resources team reference the Section 75 duties in the template used for all new Job Descriptions.

## (5) Outcomes

- We will look at the breakdown of staff, and those applying for jobs with NIBTS to ensure equality of opportunity, particularly for those with disabilities. We will take appropriate affirmative action measures, establishing goals and timetables to measure progress.
- We still need to progress work on improving outcomes for ethnic minority groups, particularly those who do not speak English as a first language. This will involve working initially with members of the Polish community in order to identify key issues and to pilot translation services.
- As restrictions ease we want to engage with different voluntary groups, especially some of the smaller BAME groups, to encourage donations.

## (6) Leadership

- We will highlight and demonstrate our commitment to the equality and diversity agenda to new leaders, such as Board members, when they join, including through training.
- The Equality Forum will dedicate more time to the sharing of good practice initiatives at its quarterly meetings.
- Over the next five years, we will widen our efforts to draw attention to equality and diversity issues relating to ethnicity and race in the first instance.

**Appendix: List of policies equality screened from 1 Apr 2016 to 31 Mar 2021**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Policy Title</b>	<b>Decision</b>
2016-17	Social Media Policy	Screened out with mitigation
2016-17	Donor Programme Strategy 2016 – 20	Screened out with mitigation
2016-17	Working well together Policy	Screened out with mitigation
2016-17	Maternity Policy	Screened out with mitigation
2016-17	Hepatitis E	Screened out with mitigation
2016-17	Emergency Planning	Screened out without mitigation
2017-18	Policy for External Quality Assessment Scheme Participation	Screened out without mitigation
2017-18	Partial Retirement Policy Flexible Retirement Policy	Screened out with mitigation
2017-18	Consultation on Equality and Disability Action Plans 2018-23	Screened out with mitigation
2017-18	Information Lifecycle Management Policy	Screened out without mitigation
2017-18	Tapestry (our Disability Staff Network) Communication and Information Screening	Screened out with mitigation
2017-18	Change Control Policy and Procedure	Screened out without mitigation
2017-18	Quality Management Review Policy	Screened out without mitigation

2017-18	Validation of Pulse Software	Screened out without mitigation
2018-19	Gender Identity and Expression Employment policy	Screened out with mitigation
2018-19	Working Time Regulations	Screened out without mitigation
2018-19	NIBTS Policy on Dress and Presentation on session/public facing duties	Screened out with mitigation
2018-19	Platelet Strategy	Screened out with mitigation
2018-19	Clinical Appraisal and Revalidation Policy and Procedure MP:024	Screened out without mitigation
2018-19	Policy on Importation of Blood Components from outside Northern Ireland MP:021	Screened out without mitigation
2018-19	Laboratory Training and Competency Policy (LP006)	Screened out with mitigation
2019-20	Conflict, Bullying & Harassment in the Workplace	Screened out with mitigation
2019-20	Sample Referral to the Reference Laboratory	Screened out without mitigation
2019-20	Upper Age Limits for Blood Donation	Screened out with mitigation
2019-20	Equipment and Medical Device Management	Screened out without mitigation
2020-21	Data Breach Policy	Screened out with mitigation
2020-21	Behaviour of Staff Including when on Session	Screened out with mitigation
2020-21	Children Attending Blood Donation Sessions	Screened out without mitigation

2020-21	NIBTS Working from Home Policy	Screened out with mitigation
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