

Nursing and Midwifery Council draft equality objectives 2012-2015 for consultation

Background

The [Equality Act 2010](#) brought all existing equality law into a single piece of legislation. The new single equality duty continues to cover race, gender and disability, but is now extended to cover age, marital status and civil partnership, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment – commonly referred to as protected characteristics. The new duties are flexible, proportionate and less bureaucratic. They move away from detailed legislative description of process to focussing on outcomes and allow public bodies, like the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), more autonomy to decide how best to deliver equality of opportunity. As a public body we are required to set and publish equality objectives which outline how we will meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 for the year(s) ahead.

The Equality Act only applies in England, Scotland and in Wales and not in Northern Ireland and the Islands. Our equality objectives will however, operate across all of the areas we regulate. We will show due regard to equalities in Northern Ireland and the Islands in the delivery of our [diversity strategy](#).

NMC approach to equality objectives

The purpose of equality objectives is to improve the focus and transparency of activity in meeting the general equality duty. Bearing in mind that many of the issues related to protected characteristics are deep-rooted and difficult, it will take time to fully address these. In developing our equality objectives we must ensure that they are challenging but achievable.

When choosing our priorities, we have considered issues of harassment, discrimination, equality and good relations across all of our policy, service delivery and employment functions. The following draft objectives cover a period of up to three years. We will set and publish new or revised objectives at least every three years. While it will clearly not be possible for us to resolve all inequality issues in each cycle, it is our aim to begin to address the most significant issues that we have identified.

We are fully and wholly committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in carrying out all our functions, and in delivering our services as a public body, regulator and employer. Complying with the equality legislation will demonstrate our commitment. Our equality objectives relate directly to our work. Over the next three years we want to deliver policies and programmes which help to bring about real outcomes for our staff and stakeholders, including the public in whose best interest we act. We will ensure that we embed and create equality and fairness for all. We are proud to be an organisation that values the contributions of all its stakeholders and we are excited for the future.

NMC draft equality objectives 2012-2015

In line with the legislation our equality objectives must:

- Be specific and measurable.
- Set out how progress will be measured.

Objective 1: Embedding diversity - we will further embed diversity in the delivery of our statutory functions.

Objective 2: Leadership - our leaders will continue to actively champion equality, diversity and inclusion.

Objective 3: Governance - we establish effective governance processes to support the delivery of equality and inclusion.

Objective 4: Staff - our staff are valued by being treated with respect and being able to work in an environment free from discrimination, harassment or bullying.

Objective 5: Service delivery - we will continue to deliver quality services relevant to the needs of a diverse community.

These objectives support our equality and diversity strategy and our three year corporate plan objective which is to “Improve our understanding and use of diversity data, embedding equalities best practice so that we are inclusive and treat people fairly”.

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NMC draft equality objectives

Our draft equality objectives will be subject to change following feedback from our consultation about the objectives.

A glossary is provided at the end of this document to give more detail of key words and NMC processes and functions.

Objective 1: Embedding diversity - we will further embed diversity in the delivery of our statutory functions.			
Action	Measure	Timescale	
1	Ensure equality and diversity objectives support our corporate plan.	Effective equality and diversity objectives are integrated into all directorates' action plans. Ongoing monitoring of equality objectives in directorates' action plans.	By June 2012 Ongoing
2	Improve our understanding of how our activities, functions and services impact on diverse groups so that we can seek to eliminate unlawful discrimination.	Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) are completed for new relevant policies and projects. We will develop and publish action plans that set out how any negative impacts identified by the EqIAs will be addressed.	Ongoing Ongoing
Objective 2: Leadership - our leaders will continue to actively champion equality, diversity and inclusion.			
Action	Measure	Timescale	
3	Establish Diversity Champions' Forum	A diversity champion is identified from each NMC directorate. The forum will meet to discuss the progress of equality objectives and directorates' action plans.	Accomplished Quarterly
4	We actively seek to ensure that appointees to our committees and Fitness to Practise panels are fully aware of their responsibilities	Training for committee and panel members is reviewed. We ensure that all appointees receive equality guidance and training appropriate to their role.	Ongoing Ongoing

regarding diversity.		
Objective 3: Governance - we establish effective governance processes to support the delivery of equality and inclusion.		
Action	Measure	Timescale
5 To provide details of the progress against the NMC equality objectives and implementation of the NMC equality and diversity strategy.	NMC equality objectives finalised and published on the NMC website. Report published, on our website, setting out progress against our equality objectives.	By July 2012 Annually
6 To analyse and publish data about the diversity of nurses and midwives on our register, and fitness to practise outcomes.	As a regulator, we are committed to ensuring that our processes are fair, objective and transparent. We will analyse and report on diversity data related to nurses and midwives on the NMC register. Fitness to practise outcomes are analysed and published. They help to identify any trends, and ensure that our procedures operate without discrimination.	Annually Annually
7 Establish diversity reference panel	Identify external diversity experts The panel will meet to scrutinise equality objectives, influence diversity policies and equality audit procedures. They will make recommendations to the Head of Equality and Inclusion.	Accomplished Quarterly
Objective 4: Staff - our staff are valued by being treated with respect and being able to work in an environment free from discrimination, harassment or bullying.		
Action	Measure	Timescale
8 Review all relevant Human Resources (HR) policies and training to ensure that the NMC meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.	HR policies are monitored and reviewed incrementally to ensure they are compliant with the Equality Act 2010. All staff complete mandatory equality training in line with NMC policy. EqIA training and guidance are reviewed to ensure that they comply with the Equality Act 2010.	By December 2015 Ongoing Ongoing

		EqlA training is completed by staff where this is identified as being appropriate to their role.	Ongoing
9	Promote relevant policies and manage the conduct of employees to ensure the workplace is fair and inclusive.	Information, and briefings, about best practice in equality and diversity, and relevant policies will be communicated to staff using the staff intranet and other internal communications channels.	Quarterly
10	Raise diversity awareness among staff by encouraging the creation of staff employee and diversity groups to mark and celebrate key diversity events.	Key diversity events are held for, as examples, Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) History Month, Black History Month and Disability History month. We seek feedback from staff and key stakeholders on related issues and, as appropriate, incorporate their feedback into our equality actions.	Ongoing Ongoing
11	Raise awareness of best practice, benchmark performance, and build external expertise covering the nine protected characteristics.	We collaborate with best practice organisations such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission. We will measure our performance against others by completing an external benchmarking index to ensure that our workplace environment continues to promote a culture which is fair and inclusive. For example, Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index.	Ongoing Benchmark by September 2015
12	Review our staff development processes to ensure that diversity is reflected at all levels.	To continue to monitor the NMC staff diversity profile at all grades and encourage diversity at all levels within the organisation. The NMC ensures there is evidence of staff development processes and robust succession planning across all directorates.	Annually By September 2015
Objective 5: Service delivery - we will continue to deliver quality services relevant to the needs of a diverse community.			
13	To ensure that the accessibility of all our buildings meets legislative	Disability audits will be carried out for all our buildings and actions taken to address any failures to meet legislative requirements.	By December 2013

	requirements.		
14	We encourage supplier diversity by making contract opportunities easily accessible to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).	In line with best practice, we will monitor and encourage the diversity profile of our suppliers with a particular focus on small and medium sized enterprises those owned by women or ethnic minority groups, as well as supported factories and businesses for people with disabilities. This will help reflect our diverse stakeholders and help us better provide for their needs.	By January 2014
15	Our suppliers mirror our commitment to equality and diversity.	Tender exercises, guidance and contracts with suppliers are reviewed to ensure that requirements regarding our commitment to equality and diversity are reflected.	By December 2015
16	We promote equality and value diversity in all our communications and relationships with stakeholders.	We obtain triple A standard for our website and adhere to BS 8878. All NMC publications, meetings and written correspondence and consultations are accessible. Communications are available in alternative formats on request.	By March 2014 Ongoing

Glossary of terms and explanations

Bullying Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour. An abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

Corporate plan This sets out our goals and objectives, and how we aim to achieve them within a set time period. Our current corporate plan covers 2010-2013.

Directorate action plans Each directorate (see NMC directorate) has an action plan that sets out how it aims to achieve the goals set out within the corporate plan.

Disability A physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to perform normal day-to-day activities.

Disability audit Designed to assess premises or environment to ensure that all provisions for disabled access are in place.

Discrimination To treat one particular group of people less favourably than others because of their age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The law recognises two kinds of discrimination: direct and indirect. Direct discrimination occurs when a 'protected characteristic' such as race or disability is used as an explicit reason for discriminating. Indirect discrimination occurs when there are provisions, criteria or

practices operating which have the effect of discriminating against certain groups of people by putting them at a disadvantage compared with others, and which cannot be justified as proportionate.

Diversity This is a mix of different kinds of people. For example, men and women, young and old people, people of different races, disabled and non-disabled people. Valuing and respecting these differences encourages diversity in organisations.

Diversity champions Diversity champions are members of staff from each NMC directorate who will encourage and disseminate good practice relating to equality and diversity within the NMC. There is also an NMC diversity champion who is usually the most senior member of staff, for example, the Chief Executive. Diversity champions attend a quarterly forum for exploring and sharing good practice and for promoting continuous improvements against our equality objectives and our diversity strategy. The NMC diversity champion chairs this forum.

Diversity reference panel The diversity reference panel is made up of representatives from organisations that advocate good practice around equality and diversity. The panel will help us to monitor progress against our equality objectives and action plans, and will provide independent scrutiny and advice so that wider perspectives are taken into account when making decisions and developing policy and practice.

[Members of the diversity reference panel](#)

Equality Equality is ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are treated fairly and equally. True equality may mean some people get treated differently to encourage a greater level of opportunity.

Equality Act 2010 The Equality Act 2010 brings a number of existing laws together in order to simplify legislation and harmonise protection for the nine characteristics (see protected characteristics). Under the Act people are not allowed to discriminate, harass or victimise another person because they have any of the protected characteristics.

Equality and Human Rights Commission The Commission has a statutory remit to promote and monitor human rights; and to protect, enforce and promote equality across the nine "protected" characteristics.

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) An EqIA is an evidence based assessment of how a proposal or policy has the potential to positively or negatively affect different groups of people, including groups that have any of the nine protected characteristics. EqIAs enable organisations to show that they have paid due regard to equality in developing and delivering their policies and functions, in line with the public sector equality duty.

Fitness to Practise Panel Once an allegation of impaired fitness to practise against a nurse or a midwife is in the form required by Council, it must be referred to one of our [Practice Committees](#). The work of each Practice Committee is carried out by a number of fitness to practise panels.

Fitness to Practise outcomes The decisions made by Fitness to Practise Panels (see above). The panel will either decide not to take further action or make an order ranging from a caution to striking-off from the NMC register.

Gender Used to describe the characteristics, roles and responsibilities of women and men, boys and girls, which are socially constructed. Gender is related to how we are perceived and expected to think and act as women and men because of the way society is organised, not because of which sex (male or female) we are.

Gender reassignment this is broadly defined in the Equality Act 2010 as: A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.

Harassment This is the unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

Inclusion Positive action taken to include all sectors of society in planning and other decision-making by reducing inequalities between the least advantaged groups and communities and the rest of society by closing the opportunity gap and ensuring that support reaches those who need it most.

Marriage and civil partnership Marriage is defined as a 'union between a man and a woman'. Same-sex couples can have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must be treated in the same way as married couples on a wide range of legal matters.

NMC directorates The NMC has nine directorates: Education, External Affairs, Fitness for Practise, Governance, Human Resources and Occupational Development, Policy and Standards, Office of the Chair and Chief Executive, Registrations and Resources.

NMC equality and diversity strategy Our diversity strategy sets out our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion as a public body, regulator and employer. Our equality objectives will support this strategy.

NMC register The register is a public record of all nurses and midwives who have met our registration requirements and are therefore entitled to practise in the UK. In order to remain on the register, nurses and midwives must follow the standards and guidance we set which helps to ensure they practise safely and effectively.

Pregnancy and maternity

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth. This includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding

Protected characteristics There are nine diversity strands: age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Race A group of persons defined by reference to colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins.

Religion or belief Religion means any religion and a reference to religion includes a reference to a lack of religion (e.g., Atheism). Belief means any religious or philosophical belief or a lack of it.

Sex Refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.

Sexual orientation Sexual orientation means a person's sexual orientation towards persons of the same sex, persons of the opposite sex, or persons of either sex.

Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index A national benchmarking exercise to provide a list of Britain's most gay-friendly employers.

Succession planning A process for identifying and developing internal people with the potential to fill key business leadership positions in the company. Succession planning increases the availability of experienced and capable employees that are prepared to assume these roles as they become available. Succession planning should be open and fair and objective assessments of all available candidates should be made. This will ensure that diverse talents are developed and diversity considerations are built into talent and succession processes.

Triple A standard The World Wide Web Consortium Web Accessibility Initiative sets the standards required to make websites accessible to as many members of the community as possible in terms of format and content. The Triple A standard is the highest rating that can be claimed.