

Equality and Diversity Council Meeting Paper

29th July 2014

System Alignment Subgroup

Purpose and context

One of the priorities of the EDC is 'system alignment' – infusing the promotion of equality and tackling of health inequalities within the key policy levers that cover the majority of NHS business.

Following the implementation of the NHS reforms, some of the original policy levers have been replaced, and the references to equality have been lost. New levers, by and large, make little or no reference to equality or health inequalities.

The work of this subgroup aims to infuse the promotion of equality and the tackling of health inequalities within the minimum number of policy levers to achieve the optimum impact upon the maximum number of NHS organisations.

Action taken to date

An initial scoping exercise was undertaken by the subgroup in order to consider the extent to which equality and health inequalities currently feature in the key policy levers, including *NHS England's Everyone Counts*; the *CCG Assurance Framework*, reporting against the *NHS Outcomes Framework and the NHS Constitution* commitments, the *TDA's Planning Guidance*, the *NHS Standard Contract*, *Quality Accounts*, *Care Quality Commission regulations*, the *Corporate Governance Statements*, and the publications of the *NHS Staff Council*.

Further discussions led to the identification of three levers that cover the majority of business for both NHS commissioners and providers. These being:

- CCG Assurance Framework
- CQC inspections/Monitor's licensing process
- Corporate Governance Statement

It is thought that infusing these policies/levers with equality and tackling health inequalities lines, at their heart, would make a significant contribution towards this agenda.

It was also discussed to explore the possibility of reporting against the *NHS Outcomes Framework and the NHS Constitution* commitments – making dis-aggregations, by the nine protected characteristics, wherever there is a local need to do so in order to highlight variances between groups and communities. This exercise will support the progression of programmes based on positive action and proportionate universalism.

Current position

Following discussion, the policy leads for the CCG Assurance Framework have agreed to embed lines on promoting equality, meeting the public sector Equality Duty and reducing health inequalities within the latest draft version of the CCG Assurance Framework Operational Guidance. Contact will need to be established with the Local Area Teams of NHS England so that their routine assurance meetings with CCGs can better take account of equality and health inequalities.

Narratives on promoting equality and the use of the Equality Delivery System (EDS2) are currently being included in CQC's pre-inspection data packs for CQC inspectors, and within the CQC inspection handbooks for acute hospitals, mental health trusts, and community trusts.

The policy leads for Monitor's licensing process, and for the Corporate Governance Statement, are currently being engaged with. The policy leads for the NHS Outcomes Framework and the NHS Constitution will also be contacted.

Key risks

- References to equality and tackling health inequalities within policy levers will continue to remain absent.
- As before, it will be left to individual champions in NHS organisations to remind their organisations to take heed of equality and health inequalities issues.
- With little or no drive from the centre, local champions may feel unsupported, good practice may not be shared, and key lessons may remain unlearned.

Next steps

1. The subgroup to continue liaising and engaging with the leads for the identified policies, so as to infuse those levers with key lines on promoting equality and tackling health inequalities.
2. To feedback on progress to the EDC going forward.

Recommendation and action requested

For the EDC to note the above cited next steps.

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On behalf of the System Alignment Subgroup of the EDC

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