

Equality and Social Need Steering Group Meeting

Thursday 15 June 2006

2pm, Room E4.02, Castle Buildings

Minutes

Present:

Gerry Mulligan	Equality and Social Need (Chair)
Claire Archbold	Equality and Rights
Seamus Camplisson	DHSSPS
Stephen Donnelly	OFMDFM Research Branch
Victor Douglas	DCAL
Linsey Farrell	Central Anti-Poverty Unit (Secretary)
Lynn Hayes	DE
Valerie Keys	DARD
Margaret Langhammer	DRD
Irene McAllister	DETI
Carol McCabe	Equality and Rights
Pascal McCulla	Racial Equality Unit, OFMDFM
John McGuinness	DEL
Liz McMeekin	Central Anti-Poverty Unit
Pauline Millar	Central Anti-Poverty Unit
Tom Wilson	DSD

Apologies:

Philip Angus	DSD
Carolyn Barr	DFP
Alex Boyle	DOE
Nigel Carson	DHSSPS
Rosemary Crawford	DETI
Elaine McFeeters	DE

1. Apologies & Introductions

- (i) Apologies were received from the following members:

Philip Angus	DSD
Carolyn Barr	DFP
Alex Boyle	DOE
Nigel Carson	DHSSPS
Rosemary Crawford	DETI
Elaine McFeeters	DE

- (ii) Gerry Mulligan welcomed Lynn Hayes from the Department of Education who was attending ESNSG for the first time and gave a brief overview of the history and remit of the group.
- (iii) Members were advised of the recent re-organisation within the Equality Directorate.

2. Minutes of 21 March 2006 & Matters Arising

- (i) Members agreed the minutes of the meeting on 21 March that had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Matters Arising

- (ii) The revised Equality Commission divisional organisation chart had been circulated to members for information as requested at the last meeting
- (iii) Claire advised members that she would be following up with Antoinette McKeown the request for additional screening criteria for use in prioritising EQIAs which had been requested when ESNSG last met.

Action: Claire

- (iv) As discussed at the meeting in March, a representative from the ECNI would attend the September meeting and give a presentation on the Review of Effectiveness
- (v) As requested at the meeting in March, the position on the Children and Young People's Strategy had been clarified and members had been notified.
- (vi) Colleagues confirmed that the BIC report on disability had been circulated to those departments which expressed an interest at the March meeting.

3. Lifetime Opportunities & Lifetime Opportunities Action Plan

- (i) Gerry passed on thanks to departmental colleagues for their contributions to both the action plan and the Lifetime Opportunities document. These inputs were given particular acknowledgment in light of the stringent timescales to which departments were working.
- (ii) Members were advised that the action plan would subsequently be referred to as the Lifetime Opportunities Action Plan as opposed to the Northern Ireland Regional Action Plan.
- (iii) Gerry offered departments the opportunity to meet with Central Anti-Poverty Unit (CAPU) officials at any stage to clarify any issues which may arise from the subsequent fall-out from the Lifetime Opportunities Action Plan.
- (iv) Pauline Millar advised that CAPU staff had been working on the development of an IT system which would ultimately be a useful reference tool for all departments.
- (v) Pauline reiterated Gerry's comments in thanking departments for their contributions to the action plan and assured members that the final version would be colour-coded and so more user-friendly for the reader. Pauline also assured members that all comments and amendments received from departments would be taken on board where appropriate and incorporated within the body of the action plan.
- (vi) Members were advised that CAPU would shortly be in contact in relation to the High Level Impact Assessment which would accompany Lifetime Opportunities and its Action Plan.
- (vii) Margaret Langhammer expressed concern that time had not been built into preparations to allow for departmental Senior Management Teams to be consulted.
- (viii) Gerry advised that the final document would be going to all Ministers for approval.
- (ix) In relation to the equality assessment, Gerry advised that it would not detract from departmental responsibility to EQIA individual policies but rather would provide an opportunity to determine if the assessment aligns with departmental Equality Impact Assessments.
- (x) Stephen Donnelly highlighted the fact that the high level assessment had drawn upon research funded by ESNSG.
- (xi) Discussion took place around the reporting cycle for the action plan. It was generally agreed that the first annual report should be timed

in order to facilitate potential changes to the subsequent action plan.

- (xii) Gerry suggested that it may be advisable for CAPU to issue an explanatory note to departments outlining: the out workings of the action plan; the role of ESNSG; and using the IT system.
 - (xiii) Pauline advised members that there would be an opportunity to see the IT system in operation before final sign-off. It would be arranged for a presentation of the system to be given to members at the next meeting.
- Action: Linsey to note**
- (xiv) Gerry went on to advise members of a newly proposed PSI priority which would look at Inclusion through Innovation and the commitment to exploit new technology as far as possible.
 - (xv) General discussion took place around the approach to be taken to this issue. However it was agreed that the necessary expertise should be called upon when required in order to inform the decision-making process.
 - (xvi) Claire Archbold suggested that perhaps Bill McCluggage, or another representative, representing E-Government should be invited to attend a future meeting of ESNSG.

Action: Linsey to note

4. Research Presentation – “Equality: Key Findings from Recent Research”

- (i) Stephen Donnelly referred members to the research project update paper which had been circulated for information and welcomed questions on any of the projects. He advised that a dissemination strategy would be agreed and members would be advised as results emerged.
- (ii) Stephen delivered a presentation to members on the findings of the Jameson report and advised that the research would be used to feed into: the review of legislation; the comprehensive spending review; and areas which require further progress e.g levels of alcohol consumption and homelessness. The report would also be a useful reference for those conducting equality impact assessments.
- (iii) Members were advised that the research produced key policy messages for PSA targets in relation to provision of childcare, the cost of transport and welfare to work.

- (iv) Stephen advised that he would be willing to deliver a similar presentation to departments if required

5. Age Discrimination Legislation

- (i) Carol McCabe advised members that the Age Regulations had been made and would come into effect on 1 October 2006.
- (ii) Members were advised to speak to colleagues in the Age team in relation to any queries.
- (iii) Carol informed members that although the legislation would not come into effect until October, that ECNI's powers would come into effect from 21 June so as to allow them to prepare workplace guidance in preparation for October.

6. Policy & Legislation Updates including departmental developments

- (i) Members confirmed that they had received the policy and legislation update papers in advance of the meeting.
- (ii) There were no specific questions in relation to the updates but it was requested that future update papers should be more up to date and that outdated information should be removed where appropriate.

Action: Linsey to note

Departmental Developments

DSD

- (i) Tom Wilson advised members of the recent announcement on Renewing Communities and that ECNI had raised concerns.
- (ii) DSD would be taking a co-ordinating role in relation to the process and had circulated information to those members who had been involved.
- (iii) Tom agreed to keep members updated as developments occurred

DRD

- (i) Margaret Langhammer advised that ECNI had written a letter of complaint in relation to DRD's decision to implement the Sustainable Development in the Countryside policy from the date the consultation period had begun.

- (ii) Margaret advised that DRD had completed an EQIA on an all-Ireland concessionary fares for 65 year olds and over.
- (iii) Margaret also advised members of the training sessions on equality screening that DRD had been running jointly with DOE. Positive feedback had been received from policymakers and Margaret offered to provide information to colleagues, if required for use across other departments.
- (iv) Claire Archbold advised that she and Carolyn Barr from DFP had met with Steve Haire from the Shared Services Centre. Discussions were ongoing in terms of provision of equality training.
- (v) Seamus Camplisson stated that DHSSPS had identified equality screening as a development need and positive feedback had been received in response to training delivered by John Kremer.
- (vi) Seamus suggested that it would be useful for DHSSPS and DRD to compare notes on the training sessions.
- (vii) Valerie Keys also advised that DARD was in the process of developing training in conjunction with Key Consultants. The Shared Services Centre was aware of this.

General Equality Issues

- (i) In relation to the Comprehensive Spending Review Claire Archbold advised that she and colleagues had been working with DFP and Ministers in order to ensure that equality considerations would be built into the process. The Equality Commission had also met with DFP.
- (ii) It had been decided that the budget would run forward for a year and the Priorities and Budget process would take place in Summer 2007
- (iii) Early consultation with stakeholders representing the nine section 75 categories would take place this summer and DFP would be leading on this.
- (iv) Claire advised members that when Ministers would receive advice for 2007-2010, a specific section would be included on Stephen Donnelly's research and other strategic issues.
- (v) Claire introduced Carol McCabe as the new person in charge of section 75 issues. As from 1 June 2006 Claire would be heading up work on the Single Equality Bill.

- (vi) Carol gave a brief update on recent work undertaken to investigate the Review of Public Administration in terms of section 75 obligations.
- (vii) Members were advised that an “equality” group had been established as part of the overall steering group structure to inform thinking, one consisting of the four commissions: Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Community Relations Council and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, as well as departmental reps.
- (viii) Carol suggested that the implementation of RPA and its equality impacts should be a topic for discussion at a future meeting of ESNSG.

7. Any Other Business

- (i) Gerry advised members that Linsey Farrell had been in contact with colleagues in DTI in relation to the European Year of Equality of Opportunity for All 2007. It was thought that further information would be available within the next couple of weeks. This would be circulated to members when received.

Action: Linsey Farrell

- (ii) Gerry advised members that a submission on the Disability Discrimination Order had gone to the minister. Public authorities had around 6 months to prepare their action plans but action plans could only be made in line with formal guidance.
- (iii) It was hoped that ECNI would have formal guidance in the system around January 2007.
- (iv) Stephen Donnelly advised that contributions to the ESNRIG fund remained outstanding from 3 departments. It was essential that these contributions were received as soon as possible,

8. Date of Next Meeting

- (i) Next meeting had been arranged for Wednesday 27 September. Linsey would contact members in advance with further details.

Action: Linsey Farrell